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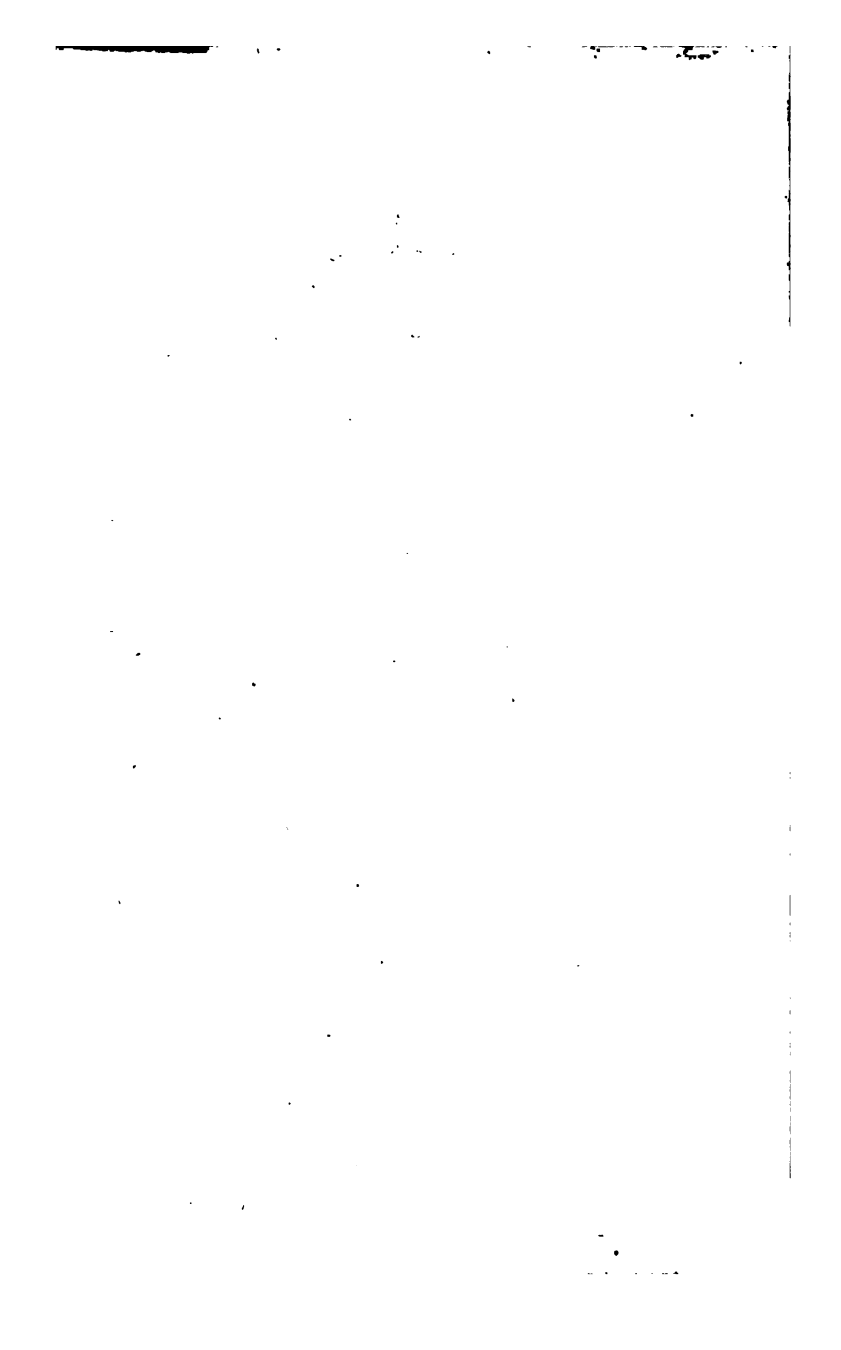
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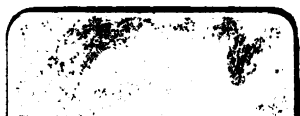
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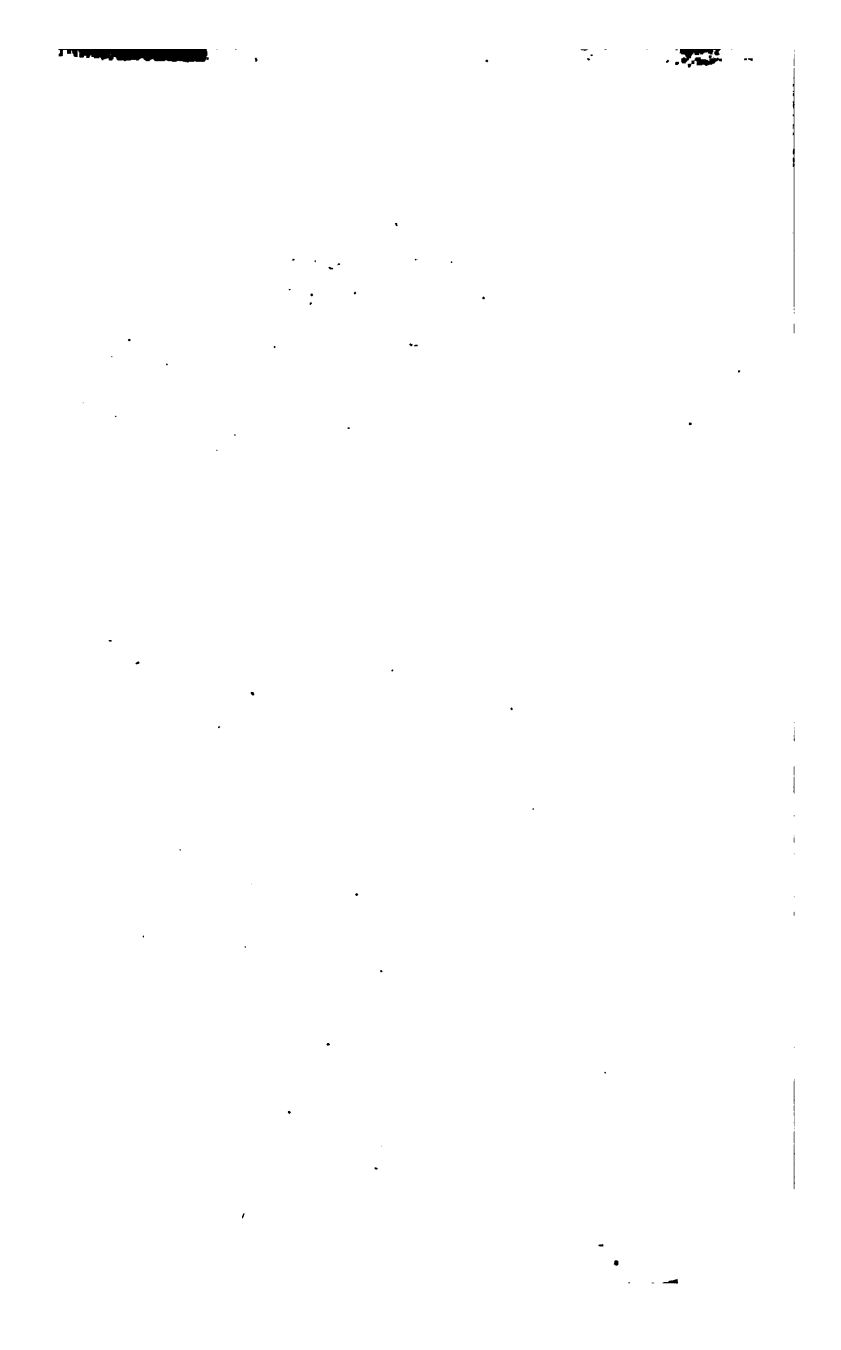
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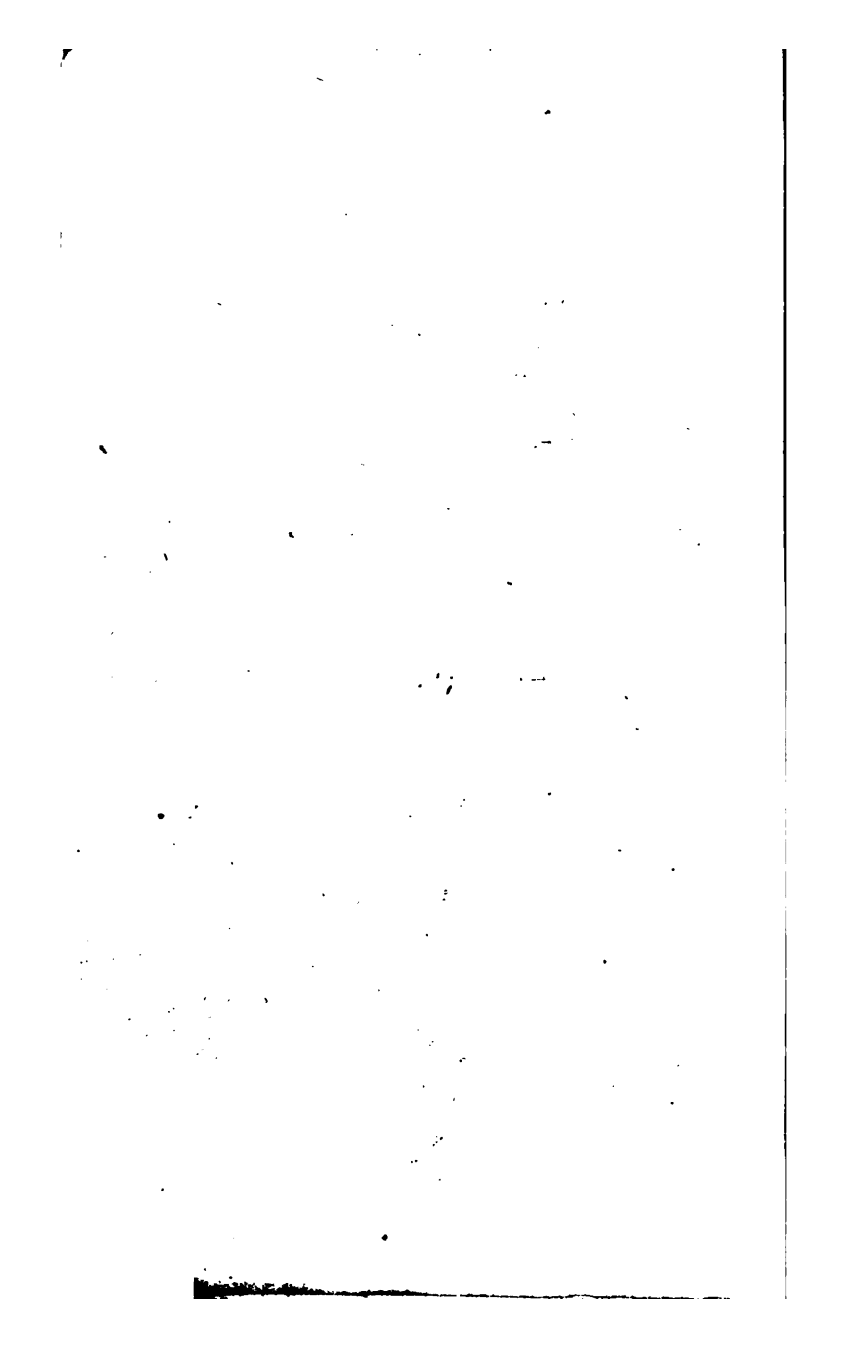






180
From the Author

HORÆ PSALMODICÆ;
&c.



HORÆ PSALMODICÆ;

OR

A POPULAR VIEW

OF

The Psalms of David,

AS EVIDENCE

FOR THE

DIVINE ORIGIN

OF THE

JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS:

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED,

TWO ESSAYS,

I. ON RELIGION.—II. ON LIBERTINISM.

La Philosophie ne peut faire aucun bien, que la Religion
ne le fasse encore mieux : et la Religion en fait beaucoup
que la Philosophie ne sauroit faire. ROUSSEAU.

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1807.



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PREFACE.

IF the Title of this little Work should remind the reader of the *Horæ Paulinæ* of Paley, or the *Horæ Mosaicæ* of Faber, the Author must frankly prepare him not to expect in the *Horæ Psalmodicæ*, the masterly spirit of acute criticism displayed in the former of those works, nor the learning to be found in the latter. — His little Tract on the Psalms aspires to no higher character, than that of a popular view of his subject, adapted to the edification of the general reader only. — The same may be said of the *Essays* preceding it.

As to the Author's motives for obtruding on the Public a performance of so little pretension, they are briefly these ; — He thought that as coming from one engaged in the active pur-

suits of *secular* Life, it might possibly attract a degree of notice from persons similarly circumstanced, which they might not bestow on the more able writings of Divines by profession ; — and he was willing also, at a time when the advantages of Revelation seem to be undervalued, by many sensible and amiable characters, (who do not however question its divine origin,) to bear his humble testimony to this important truth, the result of his experience and observation through life : namely, that genuine Christianity (by which he means the simple Christianity of the New Testament) is the surest Nurse of Virtue, — the Parent of Peace, — and the source of all that is most pleasurable, as well as most dignified in human life.

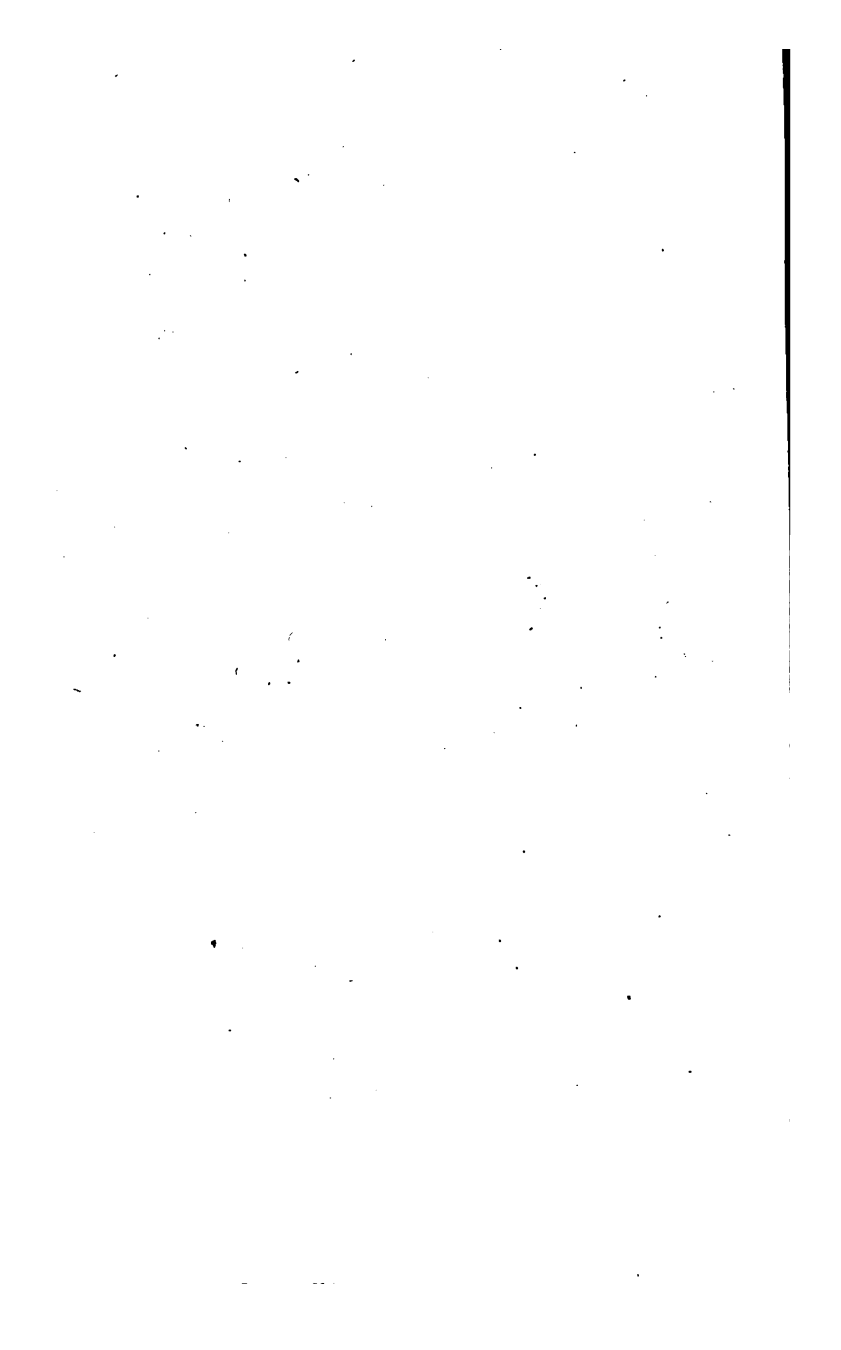
ON RELIGION.

ADDRESSED

(IN FOUR LETTERS,)

TO A

FRIEND IN INDIA.



ON RELIGION.

LETTER I.

MY DEAR FRIEND;

IN the long course of our friendship we have had abundant occasion to acquire an intimate knowledge of the characters of each other; of the motives which have governed our general conduct, as well as of that conduct itself, in all the variety of circumstances which our situations in life have successively presented. — While I have traced and admired the warm benevolence, the spotless integrity, the ardent, laborious zeal for the promotion of public and private good, which have distinguished your useful life; I have also, you know, in our discussions on the motives to good con-

duct, always attached a peculiar degree of importance to Religion, as a direct rule of life. With my general ideas on this head you are not altogether unacquainted ; and I believe they are pretty much in unison with your own ; but from what has occasionally passed between us, I think a detail in writing of my notions on the subject will not be uninteresting to my friend.

Whether we contemplate the stupendous system of the universe at large, or confine ourselves to the globe we inhabit, and to the material and intellectual state of Man in particular, we every where perceive traces of power, intelligence, and order ; which compel us to recognize in them the work of a Divine and Almighty Agent. Though much is incomprehensible, this conviction remains irresistible ; inasmuch as our experience of cause and effect will not suffer us to ascribe order and system to chance, nor something to nothing, without involving an incomprehensibility tenfold deeper, and contradictions at which the understanding revolts.

If we turn our observations inward on ourselves, we feel a consciousness of *right* and *wrong*, of just and unjust. No refinement of sophistry can argue away the universal sense prevailing in the human mind, of the existence of *good* and *bad*, and of their opposite natures. Again; we not only approve good, and disapprove evil, but we experience a sensible self-satisfaction in the exercise of good; and on the other hand, uneasiness and remorse in the perpetration of evil. This innate consciousness, this spontaneous distinction, suggests the further idea of *accountableness* and *retribution* in some future state of existence. *Without* supposing such a state, the life of man presents an unmeaning medley of tragedy and farce, and (contrary to the general œconomy observable in nature) seems utterly disproportioned to the extent of his intellectual and moral faculties, and at variance with the prevailing beauty, proportion, and harmony of the creation. — *With* such a state supposed, these contrarieties are reconciled, and the difficulties arising from them disappear. And so, in fact, we find that in all ages and countries, civilized or barbarous,

this principle of future accountableness has been felt and admitted ; and its inherent residence in the mind of man is further proved by the variety of religions which priestcraft and superstition have raised, throughout the world, on this simple broad basis.

That happiness (whether with or without reference to a future state) is the universal and natural object of the desires and exertions of man, is too obvious to require proof: all ages and sexes, dispositions and capacities, agree in the pursuit, differing only in the means of acquiring it : multitudes seek it in the gratification of sense ; numbers in the enjoyment which power or wealth are supposed to bestow ; but even these generally admit that the purest and most permanent happiness of which mortality is capable, is rather to be found in the exercise of the social and benevolent affections ; in the self-approbation and the esteem of men, which is obtained by virtue ; and in the additional satisfaction resulting from the connection *ordinarily* observable between the habitual exercise of benevolence, temperance, piety, and integrity ; and the enjoyment of health, security, peace,

and competence ; — a connection, we may remark, strongly indicative both of the beneficence of the Supreme Being, in rendering the performance of our duties the instrument of our purest pleasures, and also expressive of his *will* with regard to our conduct.

What has here been said, will hardly be disputed ; nor that multitudes who profess an entire conviction of these truths, do still continue miserably to fail in their search of happiness. Equally will it be admitted, that too many sacrifice not only their rest and health, but also their integrity and peace of mind, to obtain wealth, power, or pleasure ; though they witness around them innumerable instances of failure in the pursuit ; and not only so, but instances of their innate insufficiency, even *when attained*, to yield that felicity, which the heart of man naturally craves. Since Reason then, is, from the counteraction of passion, or from whatever other cause you please to assign, often found unequal to the securing our steps in the road which, herself tells us, leads, with the least uncertainty, to our present happiness ; and, if there *be* a future state, to our probable wel-

fare in that state; let us enquire whether our CREATOR has not vouchsafed some further light or motives to right conduct, in aid of those which reason holds out;—such a principle, RELIGION professes herself.

By Religion, I mean, “Such a sense of the
 “ attributes and perfections of God, of his
 “ power, wisdom, and goodness, as shall in-
 “ cline us (by those powerful movers of human
 “ action—hope and fear) to make his will, so
 “ far as it is known to us, the rule of our con-
 “ duct; and such habits of reflection, medita-
 “ tion, and prayer, as may *impress* this sense
 “ on our minds, with sufficient force, to pro-
 “ duce an habitual effect on our practice;”—
 and thus, by degrees, bring over *habit* to the
 side of reason, in opposition to passion and
 sense. It is clear that these impressions must
 be favourable to the emancipation of reason
 from the usurpations of passion: and it will,
 I think, be admitted as a necessary conse-
 quence, that they must *therefore* be favourable
 to happiness.

But as the force of passion, and the pursuits
 and cares of life, are found so frequently to re-

sist these impressions;—as the sense of guilt leaves the mind in doubtful apprehension whether any, and what, future punishment may attend its commission :—whether reformation for the future *will* entirely atone for past offences ;—whether, however possible or probable a future state, such a state, after all, may not prove a false notion ; as reason affords only probabilities in the affirmative of these interesting questions ; and as her results, imperfect at best, are often obscured by the momentary, but often imperious, calls of passion, or by the influence of prejudice ; or are even affected sometimes by a temporary derangement of our physical system ;—on all these accounts, something more nearly approaching to certainty on this most interesting of all concerns, *viz.* our actual future fate ; and our present duty, as it may influence that fate ; is surely highly desirable ; and this, CHRISTIANITY professes to afford.

It addresses itself to men as to reasonable beings, conscious of right and wrong ; as capable of pursuing or shunning either of these, and as accountable accordingly for their conduct.

It supposes in them propensities both to good and evil, (a state no less obvious, in point of fact, to unassisted reason, than it is mysterious in itself,) and accordingly, while it exacts the exertions of men to pursue the former, and to avoid the latter, it promises co-operative assistance, and announces pardon for every involuntary error; and not only so, but (through the medium of a competent MEDIATOR and ATONEMENT, provided by the CREATOR) pardon to our wilful offences also, if sincerely regretted and forsaken. It states our duty to consist in cultivating sentiments of reverence and filial affection towards the SUPREME BEING, and love and active kindness towards Man; which last necessarily includes a train of particular duties and self-denials, the neglect of which, from the actual state of human nature and of human society, would be hostile to the general happiness, and even to our individual welfare.

It makes allowance for ignorance, for the force of temptations, and for all the numberless varieties to be found in the capacities, the opportunities, and the circumstances of men;

and finally, it expressly provides, in a future state of existence, rewards for the virtuous, and punishments for the wicked, proportioned to our works and to our means.

This general outline of Christianity will be admitted to be sufficiently conformable to reason; and so benignant, that to a good man the certainty of its truth would surely be desirable.

It is not my intention to detail the evidences of Christianity, as an admirable *View** of these is in your possession. I shall take it, at present, for granted that its divine origin will not be denied by you; because I think no sensible and upright man—and many such there are unconvinced on this subject—(let these, however, candidly say, whether they ever impartially entered on, and *prosecuted*, the enquiry) can peruse with attention that work, without coming *at least* to this conclusion, That the probabilities of the truth of the religion do far outweigh those of its falsehood; because the

* Paley's. — A more summary statement of these may be found in the Bishop of London's "Summary of the Principal Evidences of the Truth and Divine Origin of the Christian Revelation;" also in Doddridge's three Sermons on this subject.

difficulties arising from the latter supposition are proportionably greater, and more invincible, than the objections attaching to the former conclusion. Indeed, I believe, it will rarely fail to afford *satisfactory* conviction of its actual truth to an enquirer of this description.

At any rate, it will be admitted, that, whether Christianity be true or not, a life regulated by *similar* views and precepts, is more favourable to present and (in all probability) to future happiness, than a conduct left to the unresisted impulses of the inclination.— If, then, we find ourselves averse to lead a life of this kind, is our decision on the question of Christianity likely to be that of unbiassed reason, or of prejudice and passion?

Here then let us pause:—We agree, I presume, that to *do* and to *be good* and to *avoid evil*, is our duty; and that our present, and probably our future, felicity, very much depends on our behaviour in this respect:—Let us, then, at least endeavour to *act* up to this conviction; and if to this resolve, we add an humble dependence on the Divine goodness to

assist our frail natures in the discharge of our duty, we may, I think, reasonably conclude that our efforts will not prove the less successful.

LETTER II.

To a person disposed to govern his life on the reasonable principles with which we concluded our last ; or, indeed, from any motives, solicitous respecting futurity ; it will become a natural and interesting enquiry, Whether Christianity be true or not ? Whether motives so cogent, and rules of conduct so reasonable in themselves, have been connected (in order to secure to them a more decided weight and influence) with an imposing tale of divine and miraculous authority, or whether the system actually comes from God himself ? — Whether, in short, Christianity be a pious fraud, or a Divine revelation ?

It is at least a question more worth ascertaining, than any within the whole circle of the arts and sciences; because no other interest of ourselves, or of mankind, is so nearly and deeply connected with our present and future welfare. I recommend, then, the *uninterrupted* dedication of an hour or two daily, for some days successively, to an attentive, deliberate perusal (two or three times over) of the *New Testament*, and of some judicious treatise on the evidences of Christianity. The latter will, I dare say, satisfy you of the genuineness of the former, and of the Divine origin of the Religion it contains. But your conviction will, perhaps, be more permanently and deeply fixed, though more gradually, by a *repeated* perusal of the book itself.

As its narratives, however, are so singular in history; its language peculiar; and (to us in this distant country and age) its meaning often obscured, from non-advertence to, or ignorance of, local usages and opinions, local images and modes of expression; as well as from the peculiarly limited acquirements in general knowledge, and in the art of literary composition;

of most of the authors of the New Testament ; a few previous remarks may render the first perusal more satisfactory to a reader unused to the Scriptures. And, that you may form an unconfused, yet correct, general idea of this valuable book, I would confine your *first* reading to the Gospel of Saint Matthew, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Ephesians, and the first Epistle of Saint Peter. These will afford you a competent notion of the history and genius of Christianity, and of the occasions and nature of these compositions.

One of the first points that will strike you, will be the wonderful *miracles* asserted in the Gospel ; and you will require satisfactory evidence that they actually *were* performed. This obtained, your assent to the reality of the Revelation must, I conclude, follow of course : and of this interesting truth, the treatises I have referred to will, I think, afford you sufficient conviction ; or, at the very least, leave the probability of truth so much stronger on the side of Christianity than against it, that your unbiassed judgement cannot come to the unfavourable conclusion, without a violence done

to your reason. It is not my intention, as I have before intimated, (nor indeed is it within my ability) to enter at large on the subject; — it is unnecessary too, since it has been ably done by others; but I may dispose you to a more ready entrance on the enquiry by one very simple, yet compendious, argument on the subject.

The Apostles of CHRIST were clearly either enthusiasts or impostors, or they were divinely commissioned. — They were deceived, or else they wilfully attempted to deceive; or, if neither of these, they were, what they pretended to be, the messengers of a Divine revelation. — This will not be disputed. Now I venture to affirm, that, the more acutely you examine the subject, or scrutinize their narratives, with a view to detect *either* of the above unfavourable characters in their authors, the more impossible you will find it to succeed. For, as to the first supposition, that “of their being deceived;” consider how this *could* be the case with regard to some of the most important miracles they relate; — could they not, for example, be *certain* whether they actually saw (not one or

two persons, but) multitudes (not once or twice, but) over and over again, instantaneously, completely, and publicly cured of blindness, lameness, palsy, withered limbs, and in short, of all the various distempers that afflict mankind? Whether they actually saw, or not, thousands fed and filled with a few loaves and fishes; and whether the fragments of these meals, gathered up by themselves before the multitudes, did, or did not, actually fill seven or twelve baskets? *Could* they be deceived as to the fact they asserted (and died to attest) of repeatedly seeing, feeling, eating, and conversing with their crucified Master, after his resurrection from a death publicly inflicted by his enemies? And, not to be tedious, *could* they be deceived as to the fact, whether they *themselves* possessed, and in numerous instances exercised, the power of working miracles of as unquestionable a nature as those attributed to their Lord? — And, finally, whether they were, or not, miraculously, visibly, and instantaneously gifted with the capacity of fluently speaking all the various languages of their various converts through every part of the then known world? Could

they possibly (in this particular) impose on themselves, and *also* on those they addressed? Let this be considered, and let the inference I draw, viz. that "the Apostles were *not* deceived," be resisted; if possible.

Now let us proceed to the opposite supposition, that of "their having been impostors;" that, though not themselves deceived, they deceived others. The credulity of mankind has, in all ages, been wonderfully great; but let us examine, whether many of the circumstances attending the origin and promulgation of Christianity are not of a nature to have operated most powerfully *against* an unfounded assent; and from the known tendencies of human nature to have required, in order to satisfy most minds, an almost irresistible degree of proof and conviction of its divine authority.

For, first; the nature, frequency, and publicity of most of the miracles, asserted to have been performed by CHRIST and his Apostles, rendered it nearly as impossible for the spectators to have been deceived by trick, contrivance, or legerdemain, as for the Apostles to have been so. Even the conviction produced by wit-

nessing one or two miracles would naturally be weakened, unless actually confirmed by the *favourable* testimony of the numerous spectators of so many other wonders : among which spectators, it is to be remembered, were to be found the determined and watchful enemies of their persons and doctrines ; individuals generally of the most consequence, learning, and discernment in the community.

Secondly ; it is to be considered too, that it was not an *indolent assent* that was demanded, but an absolute subjection of the whole heart and life to a specific system of conduct. The believers were required to sacrifice their strongest passions, their fixed habits of life, and their rooted prejudices of opinion ; to be prepared to encounter (what, in fact, they generally *did* encounter) persecution, contempt, domestic alienations of affection, loss of property, and loss of life. And yet thousands, not only in Judea where CHRIST was crucified as a malefactor, but throughout Greece and Rome, Asia and Europe, renounced the religion of their country, to embrace *such* doctrines, proceeding from *such* a personage, preached by

ignorant fishermen; and subjecting its converts to continual insult, self-denial, and injury.— However ready the multitude, in England for example, may be to *swallow* whatever partakes of the marvellous, would *any* tale lead any large proportion of its inhabitants to *such* a renunciation,—not transiently, but for the rest of their lives; especially if the tale appealed for its truth, not to mere pretensions of prophecy, but to actual and unquestionable miracles performed, and continually performing, in the presence of, and often upon, the converts themselves, or on those in their company? And would impostors *rest* their hopes of success, their pretensions to credibility, on ground so open to instant detection, as so barefaced an appeal to the senses of their auditors?— Before you and I resolved on a life of habitual self-denial to some of the most powerful of our instincts, habits, and opinions; before we were content to be cast out of our families, to sacrifice our property and lives; we should be *very* sure, I think, that the Divine call was unequivocal. Should we not?

Thirdly; If Christianity were an imposition,

it would exhibit a case foreign to all our experience of the capacities and tendencies of mankind. — For it would follow, that a dozen of the most illiterate and vulgar inhabitants of a country remarkable for its blind attachment to its own very peculiar religion, and for its abhorrence of all others, framed a system of religion, not only remarkable for its comprehensive liberality, but superior (as it is, I think, on all hands confessed) in pure morality to, yet differing (advantageously for human happiness, differing) from, the beautiful theories of Plato, Socrates, and the most renowned philosophers of the world. That to give currency to this system of purity, they invented a blasphemous tissue of falsehoods, the truth of which falsehoods they uniformly united in maintaining, throughout lives of active holiness, and which most of them finally sealed with their blood. And to complete the inconsistency, that, with all this unaccountable sagacity and zeal, they had the folly to appeal, for the truth of their mission, to miracles of a nature the most open to detection, and to their immediate converts, as the actual witnesses of

what they never saw. And yet that they succeeded?—Is this complication of improbabilities credible? Or if it could be possible, would it have succeeded in convincing (in contradiction to their very senses, as well as in opposition to their dearest interests) the bigoted Jews on the one hand, or the enlightened Greeks and Romans of the Augustan age on the other, to renounce their respective religions (the latter personally and pompously administered by the highest political characters in the empire) in favour of that of an obscure peasant of a subjected and despised province, who had also perished in the attempt? Could any thing short of almost irresistible conviction produce such effects?—If, then, the Apostles were neither deceived nor deceivers, they were, of course, what they professed to be, the messengers of a revelation actually from God.

The evidences for Christianity are very far from being exhausted in this single argument: The undesigned coincidences in the Gospel narratives, the originality and purity of the character of CHRIST; the unity of design of the Apostles; the destruction of Jerusalem; its

continued desolate state, notwithstanding attempts to rebuild it, on purpose to falsify the prophecy of CHRIST regarding it; the dispersion, yet marked distinction as a people, of the Jews; the proof arising from the prophecies of Isaiah, Daniel, &c. accomplished in CHRIST, and in HIM only; the peculiarity, the purity, and exact adaptation of Christianity to the wants and circumstances of human nature, all afford a powerful combination of evidence, convincing in the aggregate, though separately imperfect.

LETTER III.

NEXT to the miraculous nature of the Gospel narrative, your notice will probably be attracted by the peculiarity of its *style*. You might, perhaps, expect that Christianity would be propounded with the method, regularity, and precision of language, with which a system of

ethicks or of science would, in modern days, be exhibited; but you will find, on perusal, that not only *no* such order is attempted, but that the language used is often highly *figurative*, and remarkably *general*. It is very material to a just conception of Christianity, that this circumstance be fully attended to: and the following reasons may be assigned for the fact.

First; Compositions, even of the most scientific nature, in those times, and particularly in those Eastern countries, possessed not that methodical arrangement of parts, that correctness of language and of argument, which advantageously prevail in modern Europe; and it was neither within the capacity, nor indeed the intention, of the Apostles, to compose an argumentative system, but in their narratives simply to record the most remarkable passages in the life and doctrines of CHRIST; and in most of their epistles to their disciples, to exhort them to avoid certain temporary errors of opinion or practice, and to lead lives conformable to Christianity: in general, mentioning its specific duties only *incidentally*, as what their converts had before been instructed in, and as

what their reason, even when these duties were *originally* propounded to them, must have received as just and proper; though, till then, these duties were, indeed, without the certainty or the *authority*, which an immediate revelation from God gave them.

Secondly; Our SAVIOUR having appeared on earth, not so much to communicate *discoveries* in morals, as to *enforce* the observance of morality, by the *certain* assurance of a future state of rewards and punishments, and by further motives peculiar to Christianity, (correcting, indeed, some erroneous opinions in morals, and exalting as well as rectifying the prevailing notions of human duty and of human perfection) it was more material towards answering this end of his advent, as well as more practicable during his short and itinerary mission, to impress the conviction of his Divine *authority* by miracles, and to convey his *confirmation* and correction of the general principles and conduct in which human duty consisted, (the grand outlines of which are sufficiently marked by conscience) in popular language, and by striking images, adapted to the comprehension,

and calculated to fix the attention, of the multitudes, who listened to him; than by logical details and definitions.

Thirdly; This will appear still more natural, when we recollect that our SAVIOUR'S views were to form the heart, the principles, and *internal* dispositions of men; which done, particular duties would follow of course, with all the variety of limitations and exceptions which the infinite variety in human capacities, situations, and circumstances, would render expedient; and which Reason would sufficiently point out in each particular case; but which limitations and exceptions, many bulky tomes could not have completely contained; and thus the object of Christianity — the instruction and reformation of *all* — would have been necessarily defeated, and its knowledge confined, as a science, to a few studious persons.

While the great and broad lines of our faith and duty are, however, too clearly and too frequently marked in the New Testament, to be *materially* mistaken by the meanest unbiassed capacity, the fact of its language being remarkably *general* as well as figurative, is never-

theless too obvious to escape the observation of the attentive reader: Yet, unhappily for the peace of individuals and of communities, as well as for the honour and advancement of pure Christianity, these figures, and this general language, literally interpreted, or at least without due reference to notices of a different cast in other parts of Scripture, have produced opinions and creeds as offensive to common sense and to justice, and indeed as diametrically opposite to each other, as every unprejudiced mind will find them to be contrary to the genius of Christianity, and to the *general* scope of the narratives or epistles from which they are drawn.

To form, then, a just comprehension of Christianity, I would advise first, your keeping out of view, as much as possible, *every* human system of Christian belief; (for perhaps the purest of them are tinctured with an alloy of human passion and error;) and secondly, to accustom yourself to read considerable and complete portions of the New Testament at one time. This practice, by exhibiting at one view the peculiarity I have remarked in the language

of the sacred writers, will instruct your Reason to form a just estimate of the probable meaning of particular passages, by a comparison of these with other parts, and with the scope of the *whole* narrative. If in one place, a doctrine is proposed in language so figurative, that a literal interpretation would render it absurd; if in another, the doctrine, taken without limitation, would offend our sense of common justice and obvious truth, or militate against other declarations of Scripture, the figure must be considered a figure, the general language must be qualified, and both be construed by honest common sense, with due advertence to local allusions and modes of speaking; to the circumstances and occasion of the speech; and above all, to the *general* import and tendency of the Gospel itself.

I would instance in the cases of those images in which the future rewards and punishments of mankind are announced: These are, from their subject, eminently interesting and awful; but they are as remarkably figurative and general. As these images themselves essentially vary, some conveying ideas of perpetual con-

sciousness and acute suffering, while others express extinction of thought and being; and some are so absolutely metaphorical, as to describe the *place* of punishment by the local appellation of *Gehenna*, (a spot in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, formerly dedicated to the idol of Moloch;) as the duty enjoined or scene described, in conjunction with these threats, is also conveyed in language undeniably figurative*, as these images suppose no *gradation* of reward or punishment, (expressly stated, however, in other parts of the New Testament) and omit the obvious *limitations* and exceptions (elsewhere intimated) arising from ignorance, surprise, repentance, forgiveness of injuries, &c.; common sense surely requires us to construe the images, in which a future state is drawn, with a latitude of interpretation proportioned to that we allow to the imagery in which the duty or scene immediately connected with them is displayed. No one, for example, supposes we are actually bound to cut off our hands, or pluck out our eyes, (though, *literally*, this is

* See Matthew, chap. v. 28, 29, 30.; and chap. xxv. verse 31 to the end.

enjoined) or that such a precise conversation will be held between the Saviour and mankind at the Day of Judgement, as described in the passages alluded to;—equally figurative therefore may we consider the language that ensues, regarding the precise nature of a future state; from which we can only with certainty gather (in connection with other parts of Scripture, and conformably to Reason) that happiness awaits the good, and misery the wicked, *in proportion* to their respective merits and crimes: And that perfect justice, tempered with perfect mercy, will pass the final sentence on each.*

* The passage last quoted (Matt. xxv. ver. 31 to the end) affords one of the numerous instances of the *general* as well as *figurative language* of the Gospel. I mean in the grounds there stated of future reward and punishment, which would seem confined (and in their extreme degrees) to the practice or mere neglect of a *single* virtue, contrary both to reason and to the obvious tenour of the New Testament; which therefore require us, upon the principles of sober Criticism, to qualify the *letter* of the doctrine here, by inferring that the virtue in question will indeed have great, but certainly not *exclusive* weight, in the final judgement.—This plain principle of interpretation, honestly applied, would bring our polemic Controversialists much nearer to each other, and, I doubt not, much nearer to the *Truth*, than they are often found.

The rules here laid down are, I am aware, liable to abuse; but so are all rules, even those of the Gospel itself: an upright attentive reader, however, will not, I trust, be materially misled by them.

You will be struck with the details of *dæmoni-
acal* possession, and of its miraculous cure. As stories of this kind are now-a-days found to be mere frauds, a natural suspicion of deception arises in the mind as to every case of the kind; but I confess, that some of the cases related in the New Testament are so circumstantial, that the difficulty to me is smaller in supposing that (in order, probably, to display in a more striking and visible manner the power of Christ, and the object of his mission) evil spirits were permitted in those days to operate even *externally* on mankind, than in resolving the whole of the cases of this description, recorded in the Gospel, to a mistaken, though popular opinion: especially as this belief was not peculiar to the Jews, but general among the most civilized of the Greeks and Romans, as well as among the barbarous nations; nor do I know how else than by supposing occasional *dæmoni-
acal* agen-

cy, some of the particulars related of the Delphic and other oracles, by respectable profane authors, can be satisfactorily accounted for. At the same time common distempers might, I think, be more frequently attributed to the agency of evil spirits than the fact justified; and that the Apostles themselves might possibly sometimes fall into this error in common with the people at large. The cure was equally valid and miraculous, whether they mistook the *cause* of the disease or not.

This last remark brings me to a very interesting topic; the degree of supernatural *inspiration* with which the Apostles were endued. That they were so endued, in a certain degree, appears both from the promises of CHRIST to them, and from their own explicit declarations; and that they should be so with regard to the peculiar doctrines and duties of Christianity was material to securing the promulgation of these unadulterated by the prejudices, ignorance, and mistakes, to which the Apostles were as men (most of them, too, men of very limited acquirements) naturally subject, in common with their fellow-creatures. But that their in-

spiration was limited to the *essential* doctrines and duties of Christianity, appears to me both very probable in itself, and to have been the actual case in fact; and for these reasons:—First, it was plainly no part of our Saviour's mission, to correct men's opinions, or to inform their minds on any subject except that of religion and morals; and consequently, his Apostles were probably left as uninstructed on other points as he found them: for example, they no doubt laboured, throughout their lives, under the same mistaken popular ideas that prevailed in their age and country, regarding the order of the Universe—of the globe we inhabit—of the causes and cure of maladies—and of every subsequent acquisition and improvement in science. In every other particular than religion, Christianity left mankind to the natural progress of human intellect and human experience; and even in religion, it appears, I think clearly, that in conveying its doctrines the Apostles were left to their natural capacities, acquirements, and language; whence the variety evident in the style of the different writers, and the inelegance and want of method and perspicuity observable

in the writings of such of them in particular, whose stations in life were the most humble; as St. John and St. Mark, and even St. Matthew.

Secondly; To prove that their inspiration was not only confined to the immediate objects of their mission, but that it was of a degree to inform and remind them, even in regard to these, only so far as was necessary to preclude them from *material* error, in imparting the facts and doctrines of Christianity; we may observe that not only do the different Evangelists relate the same circumstances and discourses in different terms; and some of them omit parts of these, communicated by others; but their recollection (on a few occasions) actually fails one or other of them, in the minuter parts of some of the facts recorded by them. And these little variations (so conformable to our experience of the testimony of disinterested men, relating a variety of circumstances which had passed many years before) is, as has been observed, a strong proof of the absence of collusion or fraud in the general testimony, which *does* accord in every essential point. On this

head it may further be observed, that St. Paul on one occasion expressly distinguishes between his advice as an individual, and his injunctions as an inspired Apostle. Indeed, their miraculous powers and fore-knowledge seem to have been limited to the occasions where the exertion of them was necessary to promote the direct object of their mission. And this arrangement is analogous to the order observable in Nature and Providence: in the former, where nothing superfluous appears; in the latter, where, content with providing the necessary materials, man is left for the provision of his comforts and of his knowledge to his own bodily and mental exertions. So Christianity is addressed to us as to reasonable beings: and its evidences, its doctrines, and duties, are subjects exhibited for the exercise of our reason and of our consciences.

To conclude: As in every other object of human enquiry, so in Revelation, difficulties will occur; these will indeed diminish in proportion to the nature of the particular subjects of enquiry, and to the capacities and attention devoted to their investigation; yet still some

difficulties will remain attached to the most acknowledged and incontrovertible truths. — And this must be the case, so long as the works and ways of an Infinite Being are the subjects of the consideration of finite creatures. Yet if power, order, and design, appear in the Universe, we admit the necessity of a Creator, though our minds cannot comprehend the *origin* of a First Cause; or, what is yet undeniable, a First Cause *without* origin, from eternity. If benevolence and wisdom predominate in the creation, we infer those attributes in the Creator, notwithstanding we cannot account for the existence of Evil, moral, and physical, under the government of Infinite Goodness and Power. We assent to the Newtonian system of the Universe, because so many considerations unite to establish its truth; though its very corner-stone, Gravitation, is, I believe, rather assumed than proved; — and being assumed, must yet lead to the destruction of the solar system, unless obviated by the direct interpositions of Providence, or of some second cause as yet unknown to us.* In short, all our no-

* See Fergusson's Lectures on Mechanics, &c. page 40; fourth edition.

tions, on almost every subject, are formed on, and our general conduct is governed by, strong *probabilities* rather than by strict certainties; so the evidences of Christianity, once found to possess so high a degree of probability as to command our deliberate assent to its truth, common sense requires our adherence to this persuasion, though we may not be able absolutely to demonstrate the fallacy of every objection that the subject may admit of being started. — It is surely enough that not only its direct proofs are convincing, but that even every objection yet brought against it, has met (as, I think, is the case) with a satisfactory reply.

LETTER IV.

If, then, these things be so; — if Reason and conscience afford a strong probability, and Christianity (once admitted true) a certainty, that on our conduct in this life depends not only

much of our present welfare, but also our eternal interests in futurity ; if virtue lead to felicity, and vice to misery ; does it not, with irresistible conviction, follow, that, of all wisdom, the most unquestionable and exalted is the pursuit of Virtue : and that, of all folly, the most exquisite, as well as most fatal, is subjection to vice ? — When the great day of retribution arrives, perhaps it will not prove the least poignant source of penal suffering to the acute man of the world, to discover that his most sagacious and successful schemes of advancement (whether in the unjust pursuit of gain, of pleasure, or of consequence) will stand opposed to the meek sincerity of the simple Christian, not more as an object of Divine displeasure, than as an instance (in the eyes of men as well as of angels) of broad folly. Let the selfish, the unkind, the worldly, and the profligate (especially those whom Providence has gifted with sense and talents) consider the matter in this point of view ; and if their judgement and conscience cannot dissent to what is here suggested, let them admit and correct the *folly*, as well as the guilt, of their ways ; or,

awful alternative! stand to the just consequences: while you, my friend, join me in considering the sketch I shall now attempt of a CHRISTIAN, according to the views we have already taken of Christianity.

When, with the lights he has derived, as a rational being, from nature, he contemplates the power, wisdom, and beneficence observable in the natural and intellectual world (especially if he have any acquaintance with the modern discoveries in astronomy, natural philosophy, and natural history) his mind expands, and his heart swells with sentiments of reverence and admiration towards the All-mighty, All-perfect Creator of all. To these views are superinduced those which Christianity presents to him of this inconceivably glorious Being having created man (among, probably, numerous other orders of intellectual beings) to participate, in a state of innocence, of the fullness of his beatitude; — And when vice and error, (to which man's early disobedience had judicially exposed him) mutually engendering each other, had at length obscured the lights of Reason and conscience, and spread idolatry, violence, and mi-

sery, through the world ; as condescending to promulgate the pure and gentle law of love and justice contained in Christianity ; a law adapted to the frail condition to which human nature was reduced, yet calculated at once to enlighten, to console, and exalt it : — He beholds this revelation communicated to mankind through a DIVINE PERSON, who, though intimately connected with the Godhead, took on him the nature of Man, not only as a teacher and lively example of Righteousness, but as an *atonement* for the transgressions of those who should endeavour to obey the will of God as now revealed, and (where that revelation is unknown) for those also, who, according to their capacity and means, should endeavour to obey the same law, more faintly written on their hearts : and this atonement for offences, this substitution of upright endeavour for perfect obedience, extended *back*, through *all* ages and countries, up to the first fall of the first man, and *forwards* to the final and complete triumph of Christianity, throughout the world, over vice and misery.

When the Christian applies this law to his

individual case, he finds that his sincere, though imperfect, efforts to conform to the Divine will, will be not merely accepted, but aided and crowned with self-satisfaction here, and rewarded hereafter with an exaltation and felicity probably much exceeding the original blissful state of his species when first created: and finally, when, on contemplating the particulars of his duty, he perceives the sum of it to consist in the exercise of love, and its practice directly calculated to produce the most complete degrees of collective and individual happiness of which human nature seems capable on earth, (for not a duty is enjoined, nor a single species of self-denial is exacted, by Christianity, which may not be traced to a consideration for the *present* as well as future welfare of the whole, and commonly more immediately of the individual himself*);—when these ideas successively flow through the mind, his faculties become

* Even the exercise of *Prayer*, a duty which relates more directly to GOD, has the happiest tendency to promote content and serenity of mind, to impress the importance of justice and mercy, and to allay that *thirst* for the advantages and distinctions of this world, which sheds so much unnecessary bitterness into the Cup of Life.

engrossed with the most interesting and awful of objects, and his affections melted, refined, and exalted into reverential love and grateful admiration of the inscrutable, yet benign ways of uncreated Wisdom, Power, and Goodness.

Let us follow the Christian into the world ; and there we behold him, impressed with these views, entering it not as the motley theatre of chance, but as the daily scene of his duties, his trials, and enjoyments. His first ruling principle is to do whatever may be acceptable to God ; because he is convinced that this must be, of all others, his most important interest. And he performs his duty with pleasure, because he perceives its actual reasonableness, and favourable tendency to the general welfare ; and to his own truest temporary felicity. Under the animating influence of an habitual sense of the *Divine presence* and support, he is prepared to resist each propensity or temptation to illicit gain or indulgence, and to seize with ardour every opportunity of bringing into active exercise the virtues of justice and benevolence.*

* With regard to that branch of Benevolence which consists in affording pecuniary relief to the distressed, you recol-

of moderation and forbearance ; as the ornament and exaltation of his nature, as pleasing and useful to his brethren of mankind, and above all, as the most acceptable sacrifice he can offer to the Fountain and Approver of all good. — Every effort this may cost him, rewards itself in the pure and lively gratification which Providence has benignly attached to a consciousness of doing right, and in the brightened hope (growing from progressive virtue) of future glory ; not only to himself, but to those who may benefit by the *example*, as well as by the effects, of his goodness.

When he unbends himself to the enjoyment of the various allowed gratifications of sense, of society, of domestic life, of literature, and of nature, these yield to *him* a delight the less alloyed, as they bear the flavour of innocence ; and by increasing his sense of the Divine be-

lect, I dare say, my commendation of the advice of those moral writers, who recommend the deliberate and express appropriation, to this delightful purpose, of a *specific* annual sum ; as the most effectual means of resisting, on the one hand, the suggestions of selfishness, (under the mask perhaps of prudence) and on the other, the seductions of an improvident spirit of generosity.

nignity, they tend to sweeten his temper ; while by heightening his gratitude, even his pleasures and refreshments serve to augment his merit, as well as his felicity.

Relying on the Divine Providence, his industry in the discharge of his profession, and in the pursuit of worldly advancement, is dignified and sanctified, by making his conduct here, also, a branch (and an important branch) of his duty as a Man : while his temper is freed from that *over-anxiety* regarding the event so often found among worldly men : assured as he is, that whether he succeed or not, God will (in the secret ways of His Providence) make all things work more completely for his good, even under a failure in his virtuous labours, than the most prosperous issue of events can ultimately secure to the mere man of the world.

When his daily task is done, he has communion with God in rational and affectionate prayer. He reposes there (as in a sanctuary which the world cannot reach) his wants and his weaknesses, his sorrows and his joys : and when he rises again to run the varied circle of human trials and enjoyments, he dedicates

himself and his good intentions to the same Almighty Parent, and engages his aid and protection through the uncertainties of futurity. — At length his course is run, his probation is over; and he feels himself entering upon his “eternal and exceeding great reward,” the bosom of his God.

Unmixed, indeed, with some of the frailties, the failings, and the evils, incident to human nature, no such character has been found among mere mortals; but of multitudes, such have been the *habitual* disposition and conduct; a disposition gradually formed by the mild yet efficacious operation of Christianity, and to which millions have in every age and country made nearer or more humble approaches; thus increasing the mass of virtue and peace in the world, and securing to themselves a proportionate part in that state of future bliss which we are assured exceeds all that it hath ever “entered into the heart of man to conceive.”

To set off, then, the real superiority in true *wisdom*, as well as in true felicity, of the humblest Christian over the most successful man of the world, needs there any declamation on the

contrast? Or can affection form a wish more comprehensive of good than this — That my friend may, in the knowledge, the practice, and the consolations of Christianity, find at once an animating principle to the pursuit of his useful and benevolent labours, and an adequate (present as well as future) reward of them?

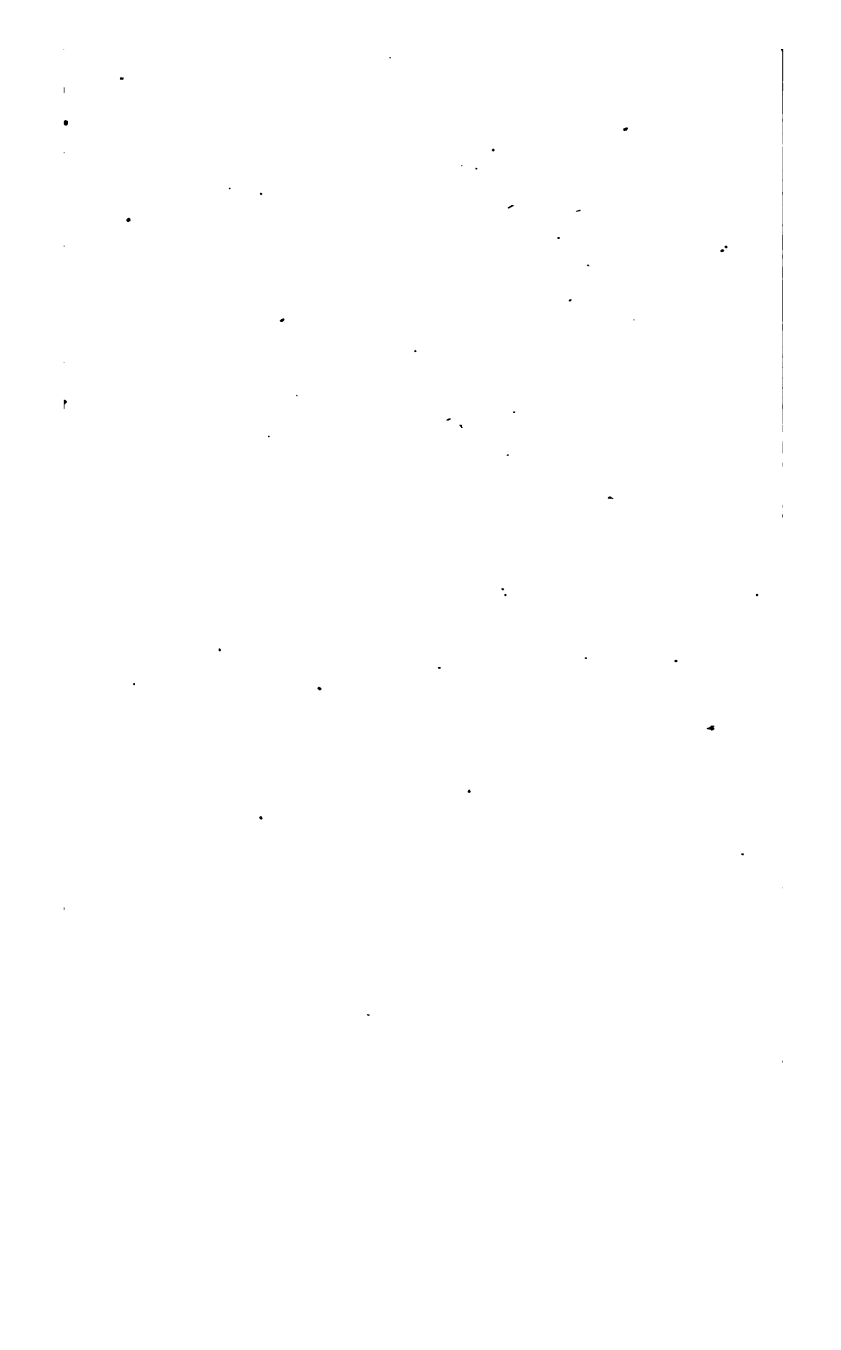
So wishes, so prays,

Yours, &c.

ON
LIBERTINISM.

ADDRESSED TO

**MEN IN THE HIGHER AND MIDDLE
CLASSES OF SOCIETY.**



ON LIBERTINISM.

Among the multitudes of men of liberal education and cultivated minds, with which the higher and middling classes of modern Society abound, numbers are certainly to be found possessed not only of the amiable, but also of the estimable qualities of the heart and mind; many whose conduct is not swayed merely by the opinion of the fashionable World, but is generally influenced by the dictates of Integrity and Benevolence. Nor can it be denied that thus much may, in a considerable degree, be asserted of many who are disposed to regard the practice of promiscuous Concubinage rather in the light of a frailty than of a vice, because it does not, in their opinion, partake of the offensive nature of fraud or oppression, nor of any other flagrant deviation from the great laws of Justice and Bene-

volence; but as rather indeed connected with the social and affectionate tendencies of human nature. To such we would more particularly address ourselves on this subject, with all the bias towards their sentiments, resulting from dispositions very much the reverse of *indifferent* to the sex, and from minds thoroughly persuaded that no practice is offensive to God, but as it is injurious to Man. We would bespeak their ingenuous attention to the reflections now presented to their consideration on this point; when they will decide whether these savour of prejudice and bigotry, or have their foundation in sound Reason and unchangeable Truth.

The actual constitution of mankind distinctly proclaims, that the commerce of the sexes is one of the primary physical laws of Nature; an intercourse to which she accordingly invites in a voice not to be mistaken in any state of society, however simple or however artificial. That this commerce is therefore innocent in itself, is as clear as that the appetites of hunger and thirst are meant to be satisfied; but whether under *any*, and *what* restrictions, becomes the sole and important question.

In a savage of North America, the unrestrained gratification of this appetite, except in the case of Adultery, (the injustice of which even a savage can comprehend,) does not perhaps partake more of guilt than the unrestricted indulgence of his appetite for food and drink. Positive guilt consists, I apprehend, in acting contrary to our conviction of right, however such conviction may have arisen; but as man in a civilized state of society is led by experience and reflection, as well as by education, to feel and admit degrees of guilt in some actions, (such for instance as the infliction of torture upon a captive enemy,) which is not felt by the Savage, it follows that what may be excuseable (or at least comparatively so) in the latter, is by no means *necessarily* so in the other.

Nature then, it is readily admitted, leads to the intercourse of the sexes; but in the evident general necessity found to exist of a *permanent* union, to the due maintenance, protection, and education of the children, (who *otherwise* would ordinarily be grossly neglected by at least *one* of the Parents, probably by *both*) and to the support of the mother in the decline of life, does she

not with sufficient clearness indicate the obligation of the union once formed being rendered indissoluble? Nay, she goes farther, for in the remarkably equal proportion of men to women, she no less clearly indicates that one man was meant for one woman, and for *only* one; while a very little consideration on the effects of a transitory instead of a permanent connection, (supposing the former universal) will satisfy us that it would be subversive of the chief benefits arising from civilized society; that the sweetest charities of life would be annihilated; and that

“ Domestic happiness, the only bliss of Paradise

“ That has surviv’d the fall,”—

would be utterly banished from the earth.

To be convinced of this, we have only to view the Mother deserted by the Father of her Child (perhaps even before its birth), and she herself acting on the same inconstant principle as himself, (for her natural right to do so would be as good as his,) and then to contemplate the probable effects on the moral character, and civil comforts of the Child, of the Mother, and even of the Father. Let us suppose this system *universal*, (and I am at liberty to make the supposi-

tion, for if it is innocent in *one*, it is so in *all*) and then estimate the consequences to society ; figuring to ourselves at the same time *our Wives*, *our Sisters*, and *our Daughters*, and those of our Friends, as forming a part of this system of moral anarchy ; and we shall be compelled to confess that as surely as Nature invites to the sexual intercourse, so surely does Reason pronounce the *permanent* union of the parties to be essential to the general welfare. And if so, the next confession of the ingenuous mind will be, that he who breaks through this necessary, this *natural* restraint ; who seizes the gratification without submitting to the terms prescribed by the actual state of Society, particularly in civilized Life, *diminishes* the general stock of happiness ; and that in so doing, he is guilty of a direct act of selfishness ; of a mischievous breach of the law of *Benevolence* ; the only law perhaps he professes to be governed by.

If from the indications of Nature and of Reason, we turn to the authority of Revelation, we shall find Christianity explicitly forbidding this irregular intercourse, permitted as well as practised by even the wisest of the ancients ; and

though in no one particular have her restraints been more generally complained of, as hard and unreasonable, yet in no instance perhaps has she more remarkably proved that her laws, (whether they happen to accord with, or to oppose the prevailing opinions of her time) are *uniformly* calculated, and without exception, to produce the utmost practicable degrees of general good, and that she has not imposed a single test of our obedience to God, but such as is actually conducive to the *temporal* happiness of man ; of society at large, or of the individual himself ; — commonly of both.

After the view we have just taken of the dreadful consequences that would result to civilized society, from the total abolition of the married state, (and the proportionate evils resulting from its partial neglect,) it would be an insult on the understandings of those to whom this short remonstrance is addressed, to set about the proof of the truth of this description of the character of Christianity, *so far* as it applies to the prohibition under our immediate review ; but I cannot help observing, though not immediately to the object of our argument, that the

remarkable wisdom with which the morality of **CHRIST** *confirms* former prevailing maxims on morals, when founded on truth, and conducive to human happiness ; and on the other hand, *opposes* and corrects them, however prevalent, and however supported by the authority, the customs, or the passions of mankind, when injurious to it, (as in the cases of Libertinism, and forgiveness of injuries,) furnishes a strong internal evidence of its *Divine origin* ; proceeding as it did from a people so bigoted, and (in general philosophy) so ignorant as the Jews, and promulgated by the meanest and most uninformed even of that nation.

The consideration too, that Christianity exacts no practical test of our obedience to God, but what tends to promote temporal happiness, or to diminish temporal misery, serves further to place the *Goodness of the Deity* in a very conspicuous and impressive point of view, and to give a dignity (before unperceived) to the character of a genuine Christian.

I have dwelt somewhat on this view of Christianity, because I apprehend it is not sufficiently seen in this noble light, even by many of its

friends ; though the strict justness of it, in point of fact, is nevertheless demonstrable.

But to return to my subject.—Without insisting at present on the authority of Revelation, which, by several of those I am now addressing, may be doubted or disbelieved ; and regarding it *merely* in its relation to the natural law of equity, and in its aspect on the welfare of mankind in *this* life exclusively ; let us fairly and honestly proceed in our examination of its pretensions ; first noticing somewhat more particularly than we have done, the evils it may be found to produce, and then candidly weighing the pleas to be urged in excuse for it : assuming as a principle of decision, that the guilt of an act is to be measured by the opposite considerations of the degrees of mischief it is calculated to produce, and of the strength of temptation or inducement to commit it,

Now the mischiefs of promiscuous concubinage chiefly consist in its injury to that part of the fair sex which is seduced into frailty and prostitution ; and to that part of it which remains chaste and virtuous : — in its injurious effects on the health and morals of the offe-

der, and of those who are influenced by his example.

I. It is injurious to the *frail* part of the sex : who as unfortunate, though often guilty, human beings, still retain their claim to human compassion.—It is computed, that in London alone, the prostitutes amount to 50,000* ; we may hence form an idea of the numbers throughout this kingdom, (not to extend the calculation to all Europe). It is well known (independent of the depravity of principle which this state *generally* produces in the sex, and the *further* crimes of which this effect often becomes a cause) that, what between want, insult, and disease, the sum of wretchedness endured by this numerous class of females is very heavy. — Let those who have had the most intimate knowledge of these unhappy creatures, trace the probable course through life (through transient luxury and lasting penury, through loathsome disease and hardened depravity) of such as have come within their own notice. — Let them mark their progress to a pre-

* Colquhoun's View of the Police of the Metropolis.

mature exit, or, if they have chanced to reach old age, through *that* state to death: And if they extend this view to the innumerable multitudes of this description, with which the kingdom abounds, they will be constrained to acknowledge that of the various sources of human calamity, this of *Prostitution* is one of the most copious in bitterness and misery. — — And yet to these evils does every act of incontinence tend to contribute; so that the least aggravated degree of this practice (supposing it never to extend to *seduction* or *adultery*) directly supports and encourages promiscuous cohabitation; the general effects of which on the health, morals, and comfort of its unhappy subjects, we have just noticed; and consequently tends to *extend* wretchedness and guilt, in direct violation of the law of genuine Benevolence, of which it is the very essence to seek to diminish evil, even at the expence of self-gratification.

We have here supposed the case *never* to extend to *seduction* and *adultery*: but whether these aggravations do not often follow, when the passion under consideration has been habitually

indulged, let those in whom the habit is formed declare *.

II. Again ; It is injurious to the *virtuous* part of the Fair Sex. — Such is the general impulse wisely given by Nature, that were the illicit intercourse of the sexes to cease, the regular connection by marriage would of course be resorted to by a great majority of those who now live in a state of barren celibacy, each of them depriving some virtuous female of the dearest union instituted by Providence to cheer the path of life. In order to estimate the evil of sensual indulgence in this one respect only, we have but to consider the effect *actually* produced on society in the middling and higher classes of it, where we shall find, in almost every family of daughters, the major part condemned, whether they prefer

* An affecting, and, happily, a singular instance of the enormities into which it is possible to be drawn by the unlimited indulgence of the sensual passions, is fresh in the recollection of the public ; where those passions were gratified not only in contempt of the remonstrances of conscience, and of the certain misery of their innocent object ; but in defiance also of the unanimous execration of society at large, as well as of the vengeance of the law. — I refer to the pitiable case of poor MARY, the *Beauty of Buttermere*.

it or not, and contrary to the evident intentions of Nature, to a life of celibacy, unless they will perhaps put up with a man whose sensibilities have been blunted, and his moral principle tainted by as many previous years passed in the corrupting commerce of Prostitutes, as the wife whom he now condescends to take has existed.— Among these daughters will be found multitudes formed by loveliness of person, and elegance of manners, by the gentle and generous affections, by virtuous habits, and cultivated minds, to enjoy and to adorn the marriage state. — Let the sensualist, whose ingenuousness is not yet extinguished ; he who fancies he cannot confine himself to *one* female for life, reflect what *he* would say to be debarred *altogether* from this intercourse ! Let him place himself for a moment in their situation,—in that of his maiden Sister or Daughter, (whose deviation from chastity would probably, though the effect perhaps of the most artful seduction, and though promoted by his own example and opinions, be *inexpiable* in his eyes,) and then let him assert, if he can, his pretensions to benevolence or real generosity. He cannot but feel that, whatever his sentiments

may be, his *conduct* is governed by selfishness and operates as cruelty. It is true that the native modesty and delicacy of the sex, confirmed by habits of self-government, by a sense of virtue and religion, and by the more fatal consequences and far deeper disgrace attending a breach of chastity on their parts, enable most single women to enjoy degrees of happiness far superior to that of the Debauchee himself, to whom we appeal; and much greater too than that of an unhappy or imprudent match: but still his conduct tends at least to deprive them of one important chance of additional happiness, and as such must resign its pretensions to *generosity*.


III. Finally, I would solicit the Libertine to calculate the effects of this practice on the health, the fortune, and dispositions of many of the votaries of illicit pleasure; —if not in *all* these respects, on *his own*. — A nauseous disease, sometimes affecting the springs of life, and reaching even to the succeeding generation; — an alienation from the pleasures arising from domestic life and virtuous love; — from elegant and useful literature; — even from rural beauty; and ge-

nerally from all the placid enjoyments connected with reflection, are among the common consequences of this habit. Not to insist on the restless agitation often attending suspense in the pursuit; the vexation and shame of failure and detection; and the disappointment sometimes experienced in the hour of success, as well as the serious consequences frequently resulting from it; it may suffice to add, that as years increase and the habit becomes fixed, a character is often produced; than which hardly any excites more general contempt,—that of an old man, teased with passions he can no longer gratify, and disgusting even his youthful companions with the perpetual intrusion of impotent obscenity.

With regard to the effects produced by the *example* of licentiousness, it is an undeniable fact, that of the mass of unhappy men, who have made shipwreck of their health, their property, and integrity; whose disorders have stabbed the peace, and destroyed the comforts and prospects of their families;—of those who have infested the world with public crimes, and fallen victims to the justice of their country, or been driven by despair into suicide, the far greater part have

made *this* practice their first step to more outrageous excesses; BECAUSE they were *encouraged* by the loose opinions and conduct of their superiors or seniors, whose *discouragement* of example and opinion would have rescued many of them from destruction, and spared society a large portion of the mischiefs which have served to embitter it.

We now proceed to consider what may be urged in excuse for this evil. In the first place, the redundance of animal life and spirits, the ardour of passion, and levity of thought peculiar to youth, are pleaded; and to deny that these are circumstances of extenuation, (particularly when opposed to the lasciviousness of maturer years) would be unworthy of the candour with which we profess to treat the subject. These certainly *are* powerful incentives to the practice we condemn; but are they therefore *irresistible*? The case of the virtuous and far greater part of the fair sex, born with the same natural propensities, would alone prove the contrary, were not instances of chastity to be found among young men of the warmest constitutions, restrained only by a strong sense of duty.



If the circumstance of a propensity being powerful would render its indulgence innocent, violent resentment would justify murder, want would excuse fraud or theft, a strong relish for spirituous liquors would sanction drunkenness: but though these circumstances certainly extenuate, *do* they justify these crimes? The fact is, it is not so much the violence of the propensity; no, nor even the numerous temptations to its gratification with which the world abounds, that occasions the frequency of this illicit commerce, as an erroneous, but popular, opinion of its nature and consequences: were these seen in their true light, this practice would be more generally avoided; and a breach of chastity be felt, and therefore resisted, as a breach of justice and charity.

The *expense* attending the married state, is another excuse offered in favour of incontinence: and it certainly is much to be lamented that the wealth which industry and commerce have introduced into this nation, has, by converting in the public opinion, the luxuries of life into its necessities, greatly tended to discourage marriage. A false estimate of the means of happi-

ness, or the want of sufficient fortitude to be content under privations, which are chiefly felt as such (not on account of their intrinsic value; but) because so esteemed by the fashionable World, deter many, and not altogether without reason, from marrying;—but though it is generally material to comfort in this state, that there should be a reasonable prospect of means of subsistence in some degree suitable to the station in life of the parties, it is *not* necessary that a young couple should set off in life with the affluence which their parents had been long in acquiring; nor is the want of such affluence a justification of Concubinage, though there may be grave parents worldly enough, secretly to prefer such a state for their sons to what they would term an *imprudent* match:—Not aware, that no imprudence will *ultimately* be found equal to that of vice, and no poverty so degrading as sensuality.

The above then are certainly strong considerations in extenuation (though not in justification) of the irregular commerce of the sexes: but before we venture to pronounce ourselves at liberty to yield to this habit, let us once more

weigh the complicated mischiefs resulting from it, in the case of almost every man devoted to it. Let us accompany such an one in his reflections, while he looks back on perhaps a course of twenty years incontinence ; while he deliberately asks himself, what is *now* the probable state of the numerous transitory companions of his licentious pleasures during that period. *He* perhaps has escaped the destruction of his health and fortune : but where is *each of them* ? Have none perished, the untimely victims of early debauchery and foul disease ? Are none of them sunk in brutality and drunkenness, objects, even to their former paramours, of unrelieved disgust ? Nay, have none of them suffered the severer penalties of the law, transportation or death, on the public crimes to which Prostitution alone introduced them ?

• If during this long period there be only *one* such sufferer by his licentiousness, let us pause a moment to consider her case. — That abandoned and declining Prostitute was once an innocent happy girl, and her probably honest parents have felt a pang in her dishonour, of which only parents having a daughter can form a complete

idea. She might but for you, and such as you, (we may say to him) have lived in innocence; perhaps enjoyed the endearments and discharged the duties of a *wife* and a *mother*; in the decline of life she might, but for you, have been supported by children (now unborn); and under the consolations of Religion and Virtue, looked forward to death with humble hope and confidence:— But now, behold her lost in brutal depravity, haggard with disease and drunkenness; and, in the short intervals of reflection, cursing the hour of her birth.

Had a ruffian, in the days of her innocence, wounded and robbed her of all her little hard-earned property, or had some unfeeling harpy of the law taken, from under herself and her parents, the beds they slept upon; your soul would probably have risen in virtuous indignation against the villains:—but say, fairly say, would not their cruelty have been, in *its effects*, mercy itself, compared to the more irreparable injury *you* have inflicted? You, who possibly pique yourself on being, though frail, at least generous and tender-hearted.

Enough, it is presumed, has been said to con-

vince even the most thoughtless, that the irregular commerce of the Sexes is deeply injurious to society, and consequently a direct violation of actual benevolence; and no man of common sensibility who has (unaware of the extent of the evil) given into this habit, can reflect on the part he has borne in extending this mischief, without concern and humiliation: to such a one I would submit the reasonableness of the following conclusions, drawn from the views we have taken of the subject.

The smallest step you can take towards mitigating the evils, your self-gratification has produced is surely this: That you should be ready on every proper occasion, and especially in conversation with the young and thoughtless, to acknowledge and sometimes to point out, the injurious tendency of this practice; and if you have occasion to refer to your own conduct in this particular, to treat of it ingenuously and with regret as *faulty*, rather than to palliate it as harmless, or (as is too often the case) to speak of it with indifference, or even with unfeeling exultation*.

* I cannot avoid noticing here, to reprobate it, a practice which I fear is rather growing in this country, of *speaking*

This is very distinct from an hypocritical pretension to superior sanctity; and if those who have yielded to this habit, would but manifest a decided disapprobation of it, the effect on the rising generation would be highly favourable to virtue; for if the public opinion was as correct on this head as it is on most other points, young men would be more influenced by it than may at first be supposed; in like manner (though not probably quite in the same degree) as young women actually are; among whom in general, there is not perhaps a more effectual motive to chastity than the consideration of the *disgrace* attending the breach of it, in the public estimation. If then you possess the slightest remaining spark of active good-will towards mankind, refrain, at least refrain from adding to the corrupting influence of your conduct, that of false and per-

with levity of a crime, (the perpetration of which is nevertheless happily execrated,) and the very mention of which, from whatever quarter it may proceed, or in whatever company, ought to produce a clear and visible expression of abhorrence and disgust, in every person pretending to the dignity of a man, or the feeling of a Briton. For my own part I should as soon be disposed to laugh over the details of an atrocious murder, as over so *unnatural* a topic.

icious sentiments on the nature of this evil. You *cannot* consider the abolition of Marriage and the *universal* substitution of Concubinage as a change beneficial to mankind ; and yet, “ what should prevent it from becoming universal, if it is innocent and allowable in *you* ? ”— Do not then, I repeat, add to weakness of practice, the wickedness of defending it on principle*.

But if you really are benevolent, can you rest here? Can you contemplate the mischiefs of Libertinism, and, unmoved by the view, make no determined effort to relinquish the habit? For wealth, for reputation, what sacrifices are constantly made! What privations of enjoyment are submitted to in camps, in tedious voyages, in unhealthy climates, or at confined counting-houses! For these objects, what care, what self-denial, what perseverance are exercised! And

* Dr. Johnson (we are informed by one of his Biographers) was much pleased with the sentiment of a young man whose passions had betrayed him into an illicit amour : “ To the injury I have done her person (said he,) I will not add that of corrupting her *mind* : we have indeed *done wrong*, and I will not attempt to persuade her to think *otherwise*.”

shall *no* energy be exerted in the far nobler, and unquestionably more important pursuit of improving and exalting our moral characters;—of promoting the virtue, and consequently the welfare of our fellow-creatures; conciliating thereby the favour of that Being, from whom flows all that is great and good and honourable? Shall we sacrifice our comforts, our health, and even our lives, for the mere *chance* of riches, and shall we shrink from the more reasonable and generous sacrifice of our selfish propensities to the good of our fellow-creatures?

Alas! mortifying as may be the fact to the credit of human nature, experience proves that, in this point, though the principle of humanity and equity may, in amiable and considerate dispositions, *restrain* in some degree the frequency and extent of the practice, and may excite an humiliating consciousness of its impropriety, (effects indeed very desirable and important—may these sheets promote them!) yet it will rarely, if ever produce an uniform resistance to the propensity, unless to a sense of its baneful consequences to society, be superadded a settled conviction of its being *offensive to God*; and of course injurious to

our own dearest and eternal interests. That what is thus hurtful to mankind should be displeasing to the Supreme Being, is eminently probable in *itself*; but Christianity puts the matter beyond all *doubt*. The following passages from the New Testament may stand for all; "Marriage and the bed undefiled, is honourable among all men; but *Whoremongers* and *Adulterers*, God will judge." (Heb. chap. xiii. ver. 4.) "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be ye not deceived: neither *Fornicators*, nor *Idolaters*, nor *Adulterers*, &c. &c. shall inherit the Kingdom of God." (1 Cor. chap. vi. ver. 9. & 10.)—The World indeed, you may truly reply, has formed a *different* standard of right and wrong, in respect to this and other subjects; but if our future state will be decided, *not* by the fluctuating and arbitrary standards of propriety we may find it convenient to adopt, *but* by that of reason and of eternal justice, it surely behoves each man seriously to reflect, on *which* of these rules of conduct it may be safest for him to regulate *his* life.

I now beg leave to address myself more par-

ticularly to my YOUNGER readers.—You who are now passing into manhood, are about to appear on an eventful stage, where you have a most interesting part to perform; *that* of rational, accountable, and immortal Beings, entering on a probation which is to decide nothing *less*, than the colour of *your* fate in *this* life, and *also* in a future and *eternal* state. No view of man can be more awful, none more conformable to reason, and none more certain from Revelation.

In grand and striking distinction from the irrational creation, (which being governed by instinct, is incapable of virtue or vice, their rewards or punishments) *you* are endowed with a consciousness of right and wrong;—with passions and affections susceptible of impressions from good and from evil; with freedom of choice and of action; and with conscience to approve or condemn the election you may make. A state of probation necessarily includes the idea of duties to perform and of errors to avoid. If vice had no allurements; if these required no effort to resist them, virtue could have *no* merit, and therefore could look for *no* reward. Throughout the constitution of nature, we find that no-

thing desirable is accomplished without effort. The earth is formed indeed with a capacity of yielding food, but, without labour, there would be no bread ; without sowing, no harvest. In the ordinary course of human affairs, independence, reputation, and the various enjoyments of life, are not to be acquired without exertion and self-denial ; while indolence and self-indulgence naturally lead to poverty and contempt. In perfect analogy to this order of things in the natural world, energy and self-government are *indispensable* to the attainment of virtue and of its rewards ; as supineness and unresisting compliance with every importunate passion, infallibly produce vice, its pains and punishment.

It is also of extreme importance to recollect that in virtue and vice it is impossible to be *stationary* ; because we *must* be making progress in HABITS, whether good or bad :—and it is *these*, rather than any particular acts, that form and decide the actual character ; it is *these* which must be the object of future reward or punishment. Now, rapid as is the growth of habit, quickly as the pygmy becomes a giant, in no respect is this more strikingly the case than in

habits of sensuality; than which, independent of the evil effects we have noticed to proceed from them, no vices more indispose the mind to those views of man which represent him, as he is, an *accountable* being, on probation for eternity.

“ However it be accounted for, the criminal
 “ commerce of the sexes corrupts and depraves
 “ the mind and moral character more than any
 “ single species of vice whatsoever. That ready
 “ perception of guilt, that prompt and decisive
 “ resolution against it, which constitutes a vir-
 “ tuous character, is seldom found in persons
 “ addicted to those indulgencies. They prepare
 “ an easy admission for every sin that seeks it;
 “ are, in low life, usually the first stage in men’s
 “ progress to the most desperate villainies; and,
 “ in high life, to that lamented dissoluteness of
 “ principle, which manifests itself in a profligacy
 “ of public conduct, and a contempt of the
 “ obligations of religion and of moral probity.
 “ Add to this, that habits of Libertinism inca-
 “ pacitate and indispose the mind for all in-
 “ tellectual, moral, and religious pleasures:

“ which is a great loss to any man’s happiness *.”

It is of importance indeed to a manly and elevated self-controul in this point, that you should perceive and feel how deeply injurious to society is the practice we condemn, and how reasonable and benignant is its prohibition, by that Divine Being whose laws are directed to the temporal as well as future welfare of mankind; but such is the imperfection of human benevolence, that this principle will generally prove an insufficient security to the purity of thought as well as of conduct, required by the Gospel; unless it is supported by an habitual and lively sense of the Divine Presence and government:—which can only be fully maintained by the regular and considerate use of *daily prayer*. Never then be induced, whatever your failings or faults, never be induced to forsake this practice. He who relinquishes this powerful protection of his vir-

* Paley’s Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, (Chapters on *Fornication* and *Seduction*). The reader of those Chapters will perceive that this Essay is indebted to them for some leading thoughts; as indeed it probably is for its existence.

toe, must be content to relinquish all pretensions to the plea of sincerely endeavouring to avoid evil, since he abandons his most effectual and easy means of success.

A nobler object can hardly present itself to the imagination than that of a young man restraining his passions (until they can be innocently indulged) from a lively sense of the injury arising to his fellow creatures, and especially to the weaker sex, from the prevalence of criminal indulgence: animated to perseverance by the elevating reflection that, in the exercise of this self-control, he is improving his moral nature; qualifying it for future exaltation in dignity and happiness; and offering at the same time to his Creator the most sublime and acceptable of all sacrifices; the sacrifice of his own inclinations to *His* will and to the general welfare.

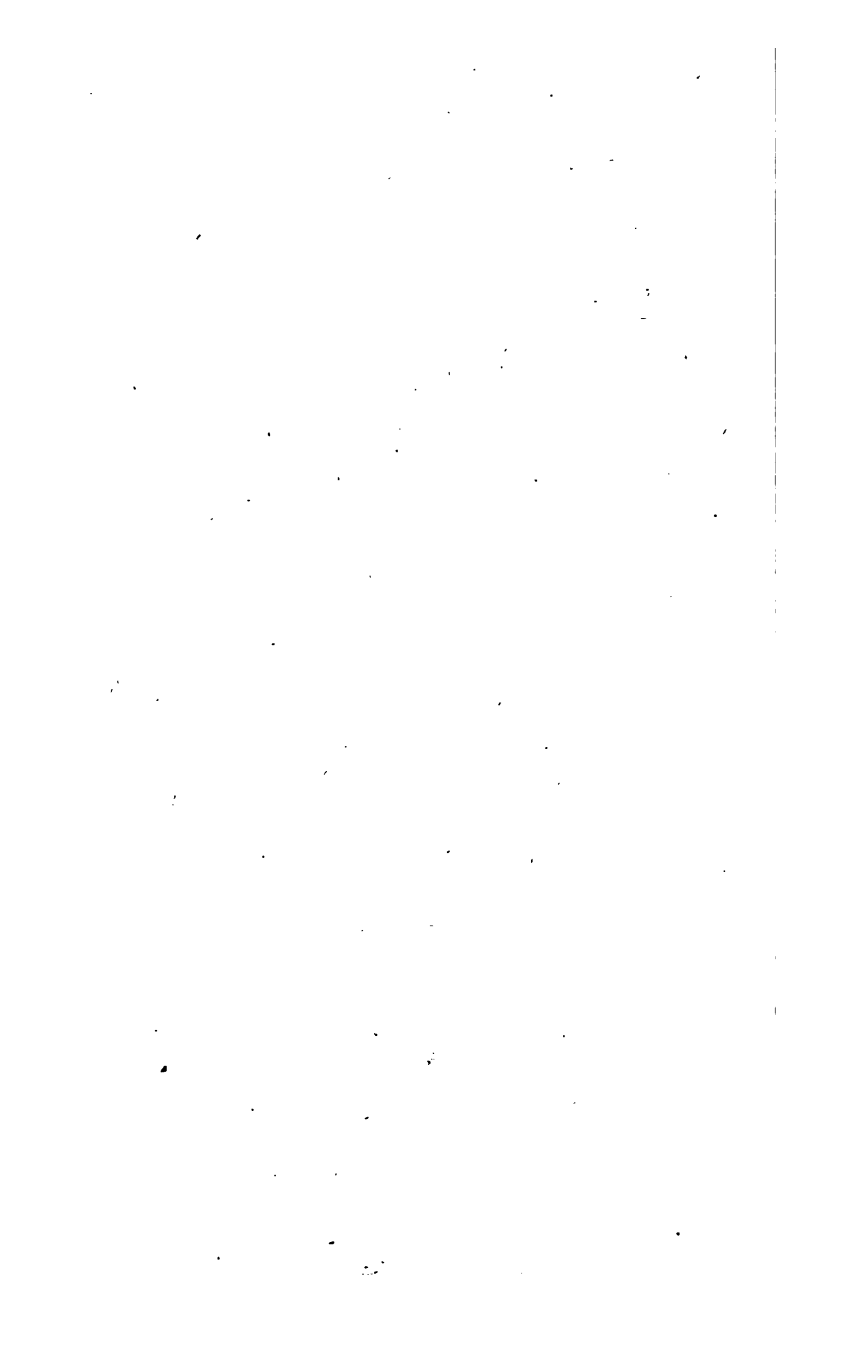
These virtuous habits, so far from weakening his sensibilities, preserve them warm and unblunted by satiety; and I believe it will generally be found, that in proportion as men abstain from sensuality, they are susceptible of the tender passion in its greatest ardency, as well as purity; and that they are as generally to be

distinguished by that esteem and delicate attention towards the sex ; the want of which so remarkably characterizes modern manners.

It has been alleged that the fair sex are often partial to dissipated characters. If this be true of some women of lighter principles, the fact betrays no less ignorance of the tendencies of human nature, than an absence of all *real* delicacy of character. For a very little reflection would convince them, that independent of the amiable dispositions and rectitude of mind, implied in the voluntary chastity (when proceeding from the noble motives we have suggested) of a youth in the bloom of health and vigour ; such a person is likely to set a much higher value on the endearments of conjugal life, than the debauchee, to whom little would be new in the married state, except its inconveniences and uniformity ; and which his habits have only served to disqualify him from submitting to, with temper and cheerfulness.

To conclude :— A more extensive field of real usefulness does not usually offer to most men, than in the exercise and promotion of a generous chastity ; and as society and opinions are now

constituted, to most men a more arduous trial of integrity does not usually present itself :—Let us therefore at least *endeavour* with sincerity to act the part our cooler reflection points out as right, and then we may rejoice in the assurance that every reasonable indulgence will be extended to error *really* involuntary, and that every effort of virtue shall be rewarded with proportionate self-gratification here, and bliss hereafter.



HORÆ PSALMODICÆ;

OR

A POPULAR VIEW OF THE PSALMS OF DAVID,

AS

Evidence for the Divine Origin of the

Jewish and Christian Religions.



HORÆ PSALMODICÆ.

THOUGH, to render complete justice to any given proposition, it is generally expedient to collect into one point of view, the whole of the evidences in its favour, in order to bring their accumulated weight to bear with the more effect upon the conviction of the reader, yet it may not be wholly useless, sometimes to limit the enquiry to a single branch of the collective proof: and, while superior abilities are employed in the combination and display of the golden chain of Truth, the humbler artist may be profitably occupied in adding somewhat to the strength or brightness of a single link;—for, besides that some are too indolent, and others too busy, to be prevailed upon seriously to enter on the investigation at large of the proofs of the Divine origin of their Faith, it is often found conve-

venient even to those who have made themselves most fully acquainted with the subject, to select one or two insulated topics of evidence, to which they may promptly refer, when the particular train of aggregate testimony, which at the time of examination produced conviction, has faded from the memory.

Of this kind is, I think, that part of the argument for Revelation derived from prophecy, which is to be found in the *Book of Psalms*; for though by no means forming the most prominent portion of the proofs for Christianity arising from Prophecy alone, yet they afford, in my opinion, testimonies in its favour, of a nature obvious to common understandings, and open to the mere English reader. — This topic has also the further advantage of being peculiarly familiar to the generality of Christians, as it forms a part of the daily Service of the national establishment.

I would briefly premise the review of this portion of Scripture, by assuming (what will be denied by none,) that these Psalms were written partly by David, and partly by others, about one thousand years before the Christian æra;

that the Jews received them as a part of their sacred Scriptures, considering them generally composed under greater or less degrees of supernatural inspiration ; and that for many hundred years before the birth of CHRIST, they believed, and do still believe, them to contain descriptions of, and references to, the MESSIAH ; his character and the objects He was to accomplish.

I would observe likewise, that as several of these Psalms apparently relate merely to the particular circumstances of David individually, or to the immediate state of the Jews of his time, so does it appear, that even in some of those Psalms which are deemed decidedly prophetic, the *leading* design may still have been to express sentiments and feelings, adapted to those temporary circumstances, yet at the same time blended with extraneous matter of a *higher cast*, explicable only by the light of subsequent events, and of a nature not to be foreseen by human sagacity.

We proceed now to the examination, whether any thing of this supernatural kind is indeed to be found in these compositions, and then we shall

enquire what further collateral evidence they bear of Divine origin. — For this purpose, we shall consider the Evidences arising,

1st, From the prophecies they contain :

2dly, From the peculiar views they exhibit of the nature and government of the **DIVINE BEING**, and of the consequent relation of **man-kind** to Him.

I. THE PROPHECIES.

THE second Psalm is in the following words :

1 Why do the heathen so furiously rage together, and why do the people imagine a vain thing ?

2 The kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together *against the Lord and against his Anointed.*

3 “ Let us break their bonds asunder, (say they) and cast away their cords from us.”

4 He that dwelleth in heaven, shall laugh them to scorn ; the Lord shall have them in derision.

5 Then shall He speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

6 Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill
of Sion.

7 *I will preach the law whereof the Lord hath
said unto me ; Thou art my SON, this day have
I begotten Thee :*

8 *Desire of me, and I shall give Thee the
heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost
parts of the earth for thy possession.*

9 Thou shalt bruise them with a rod of
iron, and break them in pieces like a potter's
vessel.

10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings ; be
learned, ye that are judges of the earth.

11 Serve the LORD in fear, and rejoice unto
Him with reverence.

12 *Kiss the SON lest He be angry, and so ye
perish from the right way ; if his wrath be kin-
dled, yea, but a little : — blessed are all they that
put their trust in Him.*

It will readily be admitted, that the first six
verses serve very correctly to express the violent,
yet fruitless opposition, encountered by Chris-
tianity at its first introduction, and especially
by its Founder, from both Jews and Gentiles.—

Now that they actually *do* relate to the MESSIAH, will appear, I apprehend, beyond all question from the verses following to the end, which on any other supposition are absolutely unintelligible; but which on this interpretation are pointed and clear, beyond the usual obscurity of prophecy; for to whom but the MESSIAH, could David possibly apply these words?—

“ I will *preach the Law* whereof the LORD hath said unto me : *Thou art my SON*, this day have I begotten Thee.”

“ Desire of me, and I shall give Thee *the Heathen for thine inheritance; and the uttermost parts of the earth* for thy possession.” Or those: “ *Kiss the SON* lest he be angry; if his wrath be kindled, yea but a little;—blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.”

The designation of the MESSIAH, under the character of *The Son*, is very remarkable; and the effects of his displeasure are described in terms, applicable surely to Him *alone*, of all human beings, who shall “ come to judge the quick and the dead*,” and will finally “ reward every man according to his works.”

* 2 Tim. iv. 1.

I appeal to the common sense of the attentive reader whether we are not warranted in pronouncing, that some passages of this Psalm (the 7th and last verses especially) *could not* refer to any thing in the immediate circumstances of David, or of his family, or his people; and that, as a whole, it cannot be otherwise understood than as a *prediction* of a future peculiar *Ruler* and *Lawgiver*; a prediction remarkably fulfilled one thousand years afterwards, in the person of CHRIST, who *did* preach a *new law*, whereof it is a distinguishing article, that He was *The only begotten SON of God*: whose law, after encountering the *furious rage* and *vain opposition*, both of the *Heathen and Jewish Rulers and People*, yet finally triumphed over both; and while "*the LORD*," in the awful destructions of Jerusalem by Titus, and in the signal dispersion of its guilty inhabitants, "*vexed them in his sore displeasure*," its Divine Author received "*the (then) Heathen world*" "*for his inheritance*," and has for ages been acknowledged "*King over Sion*," by "*the uttermost parts of the earth*."

The next instance I shall offer of an evident reference to the MESSIAH, is the *45th Psalm*, which I shall transcribe at length.

1 My heart is inditing of a good matter : I speak of the things which I have made unto the King.

2 My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

3 Thou art fairer than the children of men ; full of grace are thy lips, because God hath blessed Thee *for ever*.

4 Gird Thee with thy sword upon thy thigh, *O Thou Most Mighty* ; according to thy worship and renown.

5 Good luck have Thou with thine honour : ride on, because of the *word of Truth*, of *meekness*, and *righteousness* ; and thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things.

6 Thy arrows are very sharp, and the people shall be *subdued unto Thee* : even in the midst among the *King's enemies*.

7 Thy seat, *O God*, endureth *for ever* : the *sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre*.

8 Thou hast loved *righteousness*, and hated *iniquity* : wherefore God, even thy God, hath

anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

9 All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloës, and cassia : out of the ivory palaces whereby they have made thee glad.

10 *King's daughters were among thy honourable women* : upon thy right hand did stand the Queen in a vesture of gold, wrought about with divers colours.

11 Hearken, O daughter, and consider ; incline thine ear ; forget also thine own people and thy father's house.

12 So shall *The King* have pleasure in thy beauty ; *for He is thy LORD GOD ; and worship thou Him.*

13 And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift ; like as the rich also among the people *shall make their supplications before Thee.*

14 The King's daughter is all glorious within ; her clothing is of wrought gold.

15 She shall be brought unto *The King* in raiment of needle-work : the virgins that be her fellows, shall bear her company, and shall be brought unto Thee.

16 With joy and gladness shall they be

brought, and shall enter into the King's palace.

17 Instead of thy Fathers, thou shalt have children : whom thou mayest make *Princes in all lands.*

18 I will remember thy name from one generation to another : therefore shall the people give thanks unto Thee, world without end.

This animated description of the union of CHRIST with his Church, under the image of a royal Bridegroom, might, it is acknowledged, be supposed to refer merely to the nuptials of David himself, or of one of his Sons, notwithstanding its perfect harmony with the spiritual interpretation we contend for, were there not passages in this Psalm, that remove all doubt on the subject. For if we should admit these expressions of admiration, "Thou art fairer than the children of men," &c. (verses 4th, 5th, & 6th,) to be of dubious application, the two next verses would still fix their meaning decisively : these are too remarkable not to be repeated ; "Thy seat, O God, endureth for ever ; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right

“ Sceptre.” — “ Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, wherefore God, *even thy God*, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”

I would seriously ask to whom *could* these words *possibly* apply, but to that MESSIAH, of whom it is recorded in the New Testament, that “ He was in the beginning with God, and was God ;”—that “ He went about doing good, and knew no sin ;”—and that (in reference to the Church, as his bride) “ He loved it and gave Himself for it,” — “ that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.” (Ephes. v. 25 & 27.)

I need hardly point out the literal truth, as well as beautiful imagery of those passages, which describe the wide establishment of the MESSIAH’S kingdom, and the adoption of his religion by the Great ; — “ *King’s daughters were among thy honourable women,*” and “ the Rich among the people shall make *their supplications before Thee ;*” and again, “ in stead of thy Fathers, *Thou shalt have chil-*

“dren, whom thou mayest make Princes in all
“lands.”

Upon the whole, we confidently bring forward this Psalm, as an undeniable instance of supernatural reference to that great Deliverer and Sovereign, whom the Jews were taught by their Prophets to expect, through so many ages both before and after David; and we contend that it is utterly incapable of application to any human creature, except to our LORD alone; with whose peculiar *nature*, character, and extended kingdom it wonderfully coincides.

We now proceed to the 110th Psalm :

1 *The LORD said unto my LORD; Sit Thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*

2 The LORD shall send the rod of thy power out of Sion : *Be Thou Ruler, even in the midst among thine enemies.*

3 In the day of thy power shall the people offer Thee *free-will offerings with an holy worship* : the dew of thy birth is of the womb of the morning.

4 The LORD sware, and will not repent :

Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedeck.

5 The LORD upon thy right hand shall wound even kings in the day of his wrath.

6 He shall judge among the Heathens ; He shall fill the places with the dead bodies ; and smite in sunder the heads over divers countries.

7 He shall drink of the brook in the way : therefore shall He lift up his head.

Here too is a palpable reference to some future Sovereign, whose subjects were (from being *his enemies*) to offer him “ *free-will offerings with an holy worship:*” and who are indicated to be innumerable as the *dew-drops of the morning* :— This Sovereign was to be a *Priest* also, of a singular order, and that too FOR EVER :— and finally, he was of a dignity so exalted, that David (himself a King and Prophet highly favoured of God) terms Him *his LORD*. — Now to whom in the history of mankind, I would again enquire, *could* this apply, or be meant by the writer to apply, if not to CHRIST? of whom we find in the New Testament, that even “ *before Abraham was,*” (the great Father of David and of the

Jewish people,) “ *He was ;*” that “ *He is King of Kings, and LORD of LORDS;*” — having *subdued*, in all countries, innumerable *enemies* to God and Virtue, not indeed by external violence, but (as his weapons are elsewhere described) by “ the word of meekness,” and by the force “ of Truth,” (Psalm xlv. ver. 5.) “ bringing into captivity,” (not the mere persons, but even) “ *every thought*, to the obedience of CHRIST* ;” and becoming “ a High Priest FOR EVER† ;” — “ making intercession for us at the right hand of GOD‡ .” —

“ The LORD sware, and will not repent: “ Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of “ Melchisedeck.” — To what but to some *future and very peculiar* person and transaction, could David allude in these words? The Mosaic Law under which he lived, recognized no order of priesthood, but that of *Levi*: and as to Melchisedeck, his name is never mentioned in the Old Testament, but in the following words :—(Genesis, chap. xiv. ver. 18—20.)

“ And Melchisedeck King of Salem, brought forth bread and wine; and he was the *Priest of*

* 2 Cor. x. 5.

† Heb. vi. 20.

‡ Rom. viii. 34.

“ *the Most High God*: And he blessed him, and
 “ said, Blessed be Abraham of the Most High
 “ God, possessor of heaven and earth; And
 “ blessed be the Most High God, who hath de-
 “ livered thine enemies into thine hand. And
 “ he (Abraham) gave Him (as a token of in-
 “ feriority) tithes of all.”

So little indeed is said in Scripture of Melchisedeck, that the application of this passage to our LORD, is certainly not, at first sight, striking; yet if we turn to the New Testament, we shall find, in the 7th chapter of Hebrews, a commentary on it, which, whether we consider the *name* of his Prototype, viz. Melchisedeck, (which means *King of Peace*,) or the mysterious silence observed as to his *origin* or *end*, or his relative superiority (*sacerdotal* as well as *regal*) over Abraham himself (the *Friend* of God, and Father of Israel) these will exhibit *typical* points of resemblance to the character and office of HIM, who is justly styled the “ Prince of Peace;” — to his supernatural and mysterious birth,—and to the superiority of his *eternal* Priesthood, over that of the mortal sons of *Levi*, under the temporary dispensation of

the Law. The analogy indeed is not so obvious and close in this instance, as in those we have before deduced, but there is no other Character in History, to whom what is said of Melchisedeck can nearly so well apply:

The application of the term, "*his LORD*," to the MESSIAH, is the more unaccountable on any other supposition than supernatural foreknowledge, because it appears from other passages of the Psalms, that David was aware that the MESSIAH was to descend from himself: (Psalm cxxxii. v. 11. & 12.) an opinion uniformly entertained by the Jews, even to this day, from the circumstance of this fact being so often predicted by other Prophets also: And this is the ground of our Saviour's argument, (Matthew xxii. ver. 41.) with which we shall conclude our observations on this Psalm:

"While the Pharisees were gathered together,
 "Jesus asked them;

"Saying, What think ye of CHRIST? Whose
 "Son is He? They say unto Him, the Son of
 "David.

"He saith unto them, How then doth David
 "in spirit call him Lord, saying;

“ The LORD said unto my LORD, Sit thou
 “ on my right hand, till I make thine enemies
 “ thy footstool ?

“ If David then call Him LORD, how is He
 “ his Son ?

“ And no man was able to answer Him a
 “ word, neither durst any man (from that day
 “ forth) ask Him any more questions.”

There are other strong references in the Psalms to the long-promised MESSIAH, but as these are intermingled with matter that seems to relate more especially to the personal state of David, or of his people, I shall confine myself to extracting a few only of the most striking of these passages :

Psalm xl. verses 8, 9, & 10.

“ *Sacrifice, and meat-offering Thou wouldst not ; but mine ears hast thou opened **.

* “ My ears hast Thou *opened*,” or *bored*, — a practice observed it seems by the Hebrews with their *Slaves* : and thus these words too are referable enough to CHRIST, who, for the benefit of mankind, “ took on him the form of a *Servant*,” and “ came not to be *ministered* unto, but to *minister* ;” — and whose delivery into the hands of the Chief

" *Burnt offerings, and sacrifice for Sin* hast Thou not required : then said I, *Lo, I come.*

" In the volume of the book it is written of ME, *that I should fulfill thy will, O my God* : I am content to do it, yea, thy law " is within my heart."

The abolition of the sacrifices under the Mo-
saic Law, by the atonement of CHRIST "*once
for all,*" and the substitution of the Chris-
tian Dispensation, for that of Israel, presents
an easy, yet remarkable solution of this pas-
sage : while I think we may aver that it is in-
explicable by any other event in the history,
either of David or of any other personage what-
ever.

Psalm xxii. vcrses 1, 7, 8, 17, & 18.

1 *My God, my God, look upon me ; why
hast Thou forsaken me,* and art so far from my
health, and from the words of my complaint ?

7 All they that see me, laugh me to scorn :

Priests was purchased, (as predicted by Zechariah, chap. xi.
ver. 12 & 13.) with 30 pieces of silver, the stated price of a
Slave in those days. Compare with Matthew, chap. xxvii.
ver. 3—10.

they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying,

8 *He trusted in God, that He would deliver him : let Him deliver him if He will have him *.*

17 *They pierced my hands and my feet ; I may tell all my bones : they stand staring and looking upon me.*

—18 *They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.*

The *first* verse is certainly very applicable to the calamitous circumstances that occurred to David, or indeed to any other unfortunate person ; — but besides that these very words were applied by our LORD to Himself, at the height of his sufferings, while on the Cross ; the *17th and 18th verses* point so strongly to the minute particulars of his Crucifixion, and at the same time are so totally inapplicable to the case of the Psalmist, that I appeal to the honest judgment of the Reader, whether they do not bear the strongest marks of supernatural reference to that great event.

* Compared with Matt. xxviii. ver. 43.

Psalm lxviii. verse 18th.

“ Thou art *gone up on high*, Thou hast led
 “ *captivity captive*, and received *gifts for men*;
 “ *yea, even for thine enemies*, that the Lord
 “ *God might dwell among them.*”

On these words I would only observe, that they are singularly applicable to the *Resurrection* of our LORD;—to the triumphs of his Religion over oppression and vice;—and to the benefits of Pardon, Religious Knowledge, and Eternal Life, dispensed by HIM to a World, whom he found “ *his enemies* in their minds “ *by wicked works** ;”—and that if this interpretation be rejected, the objector may fairly be required to substitute one as natural.

SEVERAL other Psalms were understood by the Jews of our Saviour’s time, to have prophetic reference to the MESSIAH; and we find some of them quoted by the Apostles, on the assumption that they were so understood by those with whom they argued: but, as these also seem more directly explicable by the circumstances, or natural sentiments of David himself, I forbear to insist upon them.

* Coloss. chap. i. ver. 21.

From the passages already quoted I would draw the following important inferences, and put it to the candid judgement of the Reader, whether they are founded or not.

1st, That the Psalms contain passages descriptive of a *future Law-Giver* and Ruler of the world; — of dignity *more than human*; — whose dominion was to extend over the then *Heathen World*, and who was to reign *for ever*; together with specific allusions to his character, success, and sufferings: the whole, of a nature foreign to human experience, and certainly beyond the foresight of mere human sagacity.

2dly, That, with the exception of our LORD, no person whatever has answered to this description: neither David nor Solomon, nor Isaiah, nor Daniel, among the Jews: — neither Plato, nor Socrates; nor Alexander, nor Cæsar; nor Lycurgus, nor Solon, among the Gentiles, nor the more modern Law-Giver Mahomed, tally with the character and circumstances described in the Psalms*.

* The wide diffusion of *Mahomedanism* yields indeed *one* point of coincidence, but Mahomed fails in a variety of par-

3dly, That the History of CHRIST however, does most wonderfully accord with these several predictions:—nay, that it does so in a singular degree, *independently* of any assumption of the truth of the *miraculous* part of it: for Unbelievers in common with Christians, will hardly deny, that HE was of *the seed of David*; that HE *preached a New Law*; announced Himself *the Son of God*; was opposed by Jews and Gentiles; *His hands and feet pierced* by Crucifixion; and yet that His Religion was established over the greater part of the then known world.

4thly, That therefore this extraordinary coincidence of the Event with predictions so peculiar and complicated, affords a very powerful presumption of the Divine origin both of the Jewish and Christian Religions.

Particulars. He was not of *the seed of David*; nor of *the Tribe of Judah*; nor born of a *Virgin*, at *Bethlehem*; nor did he appear before the destruction of the Sovereignty and Temple of the Jews; nor were *his hands and feet pierced*; nor was he cut off for his People: nor, in fine, (though he acknowledged the Divine Authority of the Bible) did he even pretend to be the predicted MESSIAH.

WE now come to consider,

II. *The peculiar Views exhibited in the Psalms, of the UNITY, ATTRIBUTES, and MORAL GOVERNMENT of the DEITY; and of the consequent Relation of Mankind to Him.*

THAT the doctrine of the UNITY of the Divine Nature uniformly pervades the Psalms of David and the Old Testament throughout, is so obvious on the slightest perusal, that to dwell on the proof of the fact would be superfluous. We shall here transcribe only two or three instances, referring the reader to every page of the Psalms for further evidence.

Psalm xc. ver. 2.

“ Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made, *Thou art God from everlasting, and world without end.*”

Psalm xcv. ver. 6 & 7.

“ O come, let us worship and fall down, and kneel before the LORD our Maker ;

“ For *He is the LORD our God* : and we are

the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand."

Psalm xcvi. ver. 7.

"Confounded be all they that worship *carved images*, and that delight in *vain gods*: *worship Him, all ye Gods.*"

Psalm c. ver. 2.

"Be ye sure that the LORD *He* is GOD; it is *He that hath made us*, and not we ourselves: we are his people and the sheep of his pasture."

Psalm xvi. ver. 4 & 5.

"But they that run after *another God*, shall have great trouble.

"Their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer; neither make mention of their name within my lips."

But the doctrine itself is so entirely consonant to sound reason, and so universally felt and acknowledged as such, at this day, that the argument we would deduce from it in favour of the inspiration of the Psalms, will not be fairly appreciated without a reference to the state of religious knowledge throughout the world at, and after the period of their composition.

David flourished, as has been already observed, about *one thousand years* before CHRIST, and about two hundred years before Hesiod and Homer.—Now, neither in their times, nor for *ten* subsequent centuries, was there a single country besides Judea, of which history furnishes any memorial, that addressed their worship to the *One First Cause*; still less *confined* it to Him: neither the heroes nor sages of the Iliad, nor the polished and acute inhabitants of Greece or Rome, of more civilized after-times, exhibit a single exception to this universal and remarkable fact; while the Jews alone, during this immense period of time, and for ages before it, (if we except some comparatively short lapses into idolatry,) acknowledged *One Deity only*; the spiritual, holy, omnipresent, and omnipotent Creator, and sole Governor of the universe; and they uniformly ascribed their knowledge of his Unity to *special Revelation*,

It is true, that the reasoning powers of some more refined minds among the Heathens, led them to suppose a *First Cause*, of a pure and spiritual nature; but not only had their opinions no

practical influence on the worship of their country, but these opinions seem often to have been, even with themselves, rather surmises than settled conviction, and consequently to have left themselves, in common with the multitude, a prey to Idolatry. In none of their Sages do we find any thing like the following decisive language on the subject of Polytheism :

Psalm cxxxv. ver. 15—18.

“ The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands.

“ They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not.

“ They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths.

“ They that make them, are like unto them : so is every one that trusteth in them.”

And if we discover nothing like this conviction among individual Heathen Philosophers, still less shall we find such sentiments formally adopted and acted upon, (as was the case with the Jewish People *at large*) by any other nation whatever.

One of the last acts of the life of Socrates (the most god-like of the Heathen Philosophers) was to direct the sacrifice of a cock to Esculapius; and the wisdom of Cicero, the most enlightened of the Philosophers of the Augustan Age, only enabled him to detect the absurdity of the popular faith, without either leading him to forsake idolatry, or arriving at any *settled* persuasion of the Unity of the Divine Nature*: on the contrary, he always supposes a variety of gods, concerned in the moral and natural government of the world:—while equally in the times of Socrates and of Cicero, and for centuries anterior, every Jewish peasant retained the *firmest* conviction of the Divine Unity. If this remarkable and important difference did not originate in the cause to which the Jews themselves ascribed it (namely, Divine Revelation) whence did it arise?

AGAIN: The absolute SPIRITUALITY and HOLINESS of the Deity, was a tenet peculiar also to

* Cicero de Naturâ Deorum.

the Jews. The proofs to be found of this in the Psalms, and throughout the Old Testament, are as abundant as those of his Unity: and this doctrine seems no less obvious to right reason; so that here again we must, to give this consideration its due weight, (as a presumptive proof of the Inspiration of the Psalms,) refer to the sentiments of the Heathen World on this subject:—We shall first quote two or three passages, out of hundreds that offer, to shew the Psalmist's ideas on this head.

Psalm xcix. ver. 5.

“ O magnify the LORD our God, and fall down before his footstool, for *He is holy*.”

Psalm iv. ver. 3—5.

“ Know this also, that the LORD hath chosen to himself the man that is *godly*: when I call upon the LORD, He will hear me.

“ Stand in awe, and *sin not*: commune with your own heart, and in your chamber, and be still.

“ Offer the sacrifice of *righteousness*: and put your trust in the LORD.”

Psalm xv.

1 Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle :
or who shall rest upon thy holy hill ? —

2 Even he that leadeth an *uncorrupt life*,
and doeth the thing which is *right*, and speak-
eth the truth from his heart.

3 He that hath used *no deceit* in his tongue,
nor done *evil* to his neighbour ; and hath not
slandered his neighbour.

4 He that setteth not by himself, but is *lowly*
in his own eyes, and maketh much of them that
fear the LORD.

5 He that sweareth unto his neighbour, and
disappointeth him not, *though it were to his*
own hindrance.

6 He that hath not given his money upon
usury, nor *taken reward against the innocent*.

7 Whoso doeth these things, shall never
fall.

Psalm xxiv. ver. 3—6.

“ Who shall ascend into the Hill of the
LORD : or who shall rise up in his holy
place ?

“ Even he that hath *clean hands* and a *pure*
heart, and that hath not lift up his mind

unto vanity, nor sworn to *deceive* his neighbour.

“ He shall receive the blessing from the LORD: and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

“ This is the generation of them that seek him; even of them that seek thy face, O Jacob.”

Psalm xxxiv. ver. 15 & 16.

“ The eyes of the LORD are over the *righteous*, and His ears are open unto his prayers.

“ The countenance of the LORD is *against them that do evil*: to root out the remembrance of them from the earth.”

Psalm cxlvi. ver. 9.

“ The LORD careth for the stranger: He defendeth the fatherless and widow: *as for the way of the ungodly, He turneth it upside down.*”

The Psalms throughout uniformly suppose, (as did the Jewish people at large) the immaculate Spirituality and Sanctity of the Deity: while on the other hand, whether we look to the barbarous ages and countries contemporary with David, or to Greece in her highest sub-

sequent state of Science and Art, or to Rome even in her Virgilian days, we every where observe human passions of the most unworthy kind, attributed to their gods: — if human sacrifices ceased to be offered, as nations became more civilized, still sensuality, revenge, and injustice, mark the ^{an}imals of the Heathen Mythology: the Olympian Jove himself intrigues; Venus presides over lust; Mercury patronizes thefts and fraud; and Apollo flays Marsyas alive, (not as a punishment of vice, but) as a rival flatter!

Their actual worship, in their *best* times, was a mixture of the most puerile superstitions, (as to Auguries, &c.) and of the most gross licentiousness: while in *other* periods it was stained with the most horrid cruelty; their very children being made “to pass through the fire,” and sacrificed to their ferocious gods.

Whence this extraordinary distinction? — Whence had the Jews, (always far behind much of the Heathen World in science, arts, and war,) whence had they, even in periods the most remote, before the days of Homer himself, sentiments of the Deity, so just and so

sublime, and a practical worship so free from cruelty and impurity; while the accumulated wisdom of civilized Philosophy made, for so many following ages, such imperfect approaches to these great truths, or to a worship suited to them? Had these opposite effects no opposite causes?—And if the difference is not to be traced to Divine Revelation, how else, on rational principles, is it to be accounted for*?

* In the East Indies, among a people who had been far advanced in civilization, when the country of their present British masters was in a state of barbarism, not a year passes that does not witness mothers casting their children into the Ganges, as a religious offering; and men deliberately prostrating themselves under the ponderous chariot-wheels of their gods, to be crushed to death, as a Sin-offering to them. Yet when the religious opinions and practices of these people shall be meliorated by the light of the Gospel, (as I trust will be the case,) we may expect some notable Indian Philosopher, of a subsequent age, to discover (as has been discovered among ourselves,) that Revelation has furnished no information respecting the Attributes and Will of God, or regarding human duty, beyond what reason had already sufficiently afforded!—I refer with pleasure to a note to the venerable Bishop of London's "Beneficial Effects of Christianity, &c." (page 57,) which I first met with, while correcting this sheet for the press.—From a quotation in that excellent work, I borrow my motto.

FURTHER :—Another remarkable peculiarity in the Psalms of David, is the tone of elevated, yet rational DEVOTION towards the Supreme Being, and of lively CONFIDENCE in his Providence, which pervades them. Some instances of these are here transcribed :

Psalm xxiii.

1 *The Lord is my Shepherd; therefore can I lack nothing.*

2 He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort.

3 He shall convert my soul; and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, *for Thou art with me*; Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me.

5 Thou shalt prepare a table before me against them that trouble me; Thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full.

6 But thy loving kindness and mercy shall

follow me all the days of my life : and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Psalm xxv. ver. 1—6.

“ Unto Thee, O LORD, will I lift up my Soul ; *my God, I have put my trust in Thee :* O let me not be confounded, neither let mine enemies triumph over me.

“ For all they that hope in Thee, shall not be ashamed : but such as transgress without a cause, shall be put to confusion.

“ Shew me thy ways, O LORD : and teach me thy paths.

“ Lead me forth in thy truth, and learn me : for Thou art The God of my salvation ; *in Thee hath been my hope* all the day long.

“ Call to remembrance, O LORD, thy tender mercies, and thy loving-kindnesses which have been ever of old.

“ O remember not the sins and offences of my youth ; but according to thy mercy think Thou upon me, O LORD, for thy goodness.”

Psalm xxvii. 1, 3, 5 & 16.

“ The LORD is my light and my salva-

tion; whom then shall I fear? *The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid?*

“ Though an host of men were laid against me, yet shall not my heart be afraid: and though there rose up war against me, yet *will I put my trust in Him.*

“ For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his tabernacle: yea, in the secret place of his dwelling shall he hide me, and set me up upon a rock of stone.

“ O, tarry thou the Lord’s leisure: be strong, and He shall comfort thine heart; and *put thou thy trust in the Lord.*”

Psalm lxxiii. ver. 25.

“ *My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*”

Psalm xxxi. ver. 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26 & 27.

16 But *my hope hath been in Thee, O Lord, I have said Thou art my God.*

17 *My time is in thy hand; deliver me. from*

the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.

18 Shew thy servant the light of thy countenance, and save me for thy mercies' sake.

21 O how plentiful is thy goodness which Thou hast laid up *for them that fear Thee*: and that Thou hast prepared for them that *put their trust in thee*: even before the sons of men!

22 *Thou shalt hide them privily* by thine own presence from the provoking of all men: *Thou shalt keep them secretly* in thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues.

24 And when I made haste, I said, "I am cast out of the sight of thine eyes."

25 Nevertheless Thou heardest the voice of my prayer, when I cried unto Thee.

26 O love the LORD, all ye his Saints; for the LORD preserveth them that are faithful, and plenteously rewardeth the proud doer.

27 Be strong, and He shall establish your heart; *all ye that put your trust in the Lord.*

Psalm xxxvii. ver. 23—25.

“ The **LORD** ordereth a good man's going; and maketh his way acceptable to himself.

“ Though he fall, he shall not be cast away; for the **LORD** upholdeth him with his hand.

“ I have been young and now am old, and yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread.”

When betrayed into Vice, the Psalmist's deep sense of his guilt and ingratitude, and at the same time his trust in the Divine Mercy, are very forcibly expressed :

Psalm xxxii. ver. 1—6.

“ Blessed is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven and whose sin is covered.

“ Blessed is the man unto whom the **LORD** imputeth no sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

“ For while I hold my tongue, my bones consumed away through my daily complaining.

“ For thy hand is heavy upon me day and night, and my moisture is like the drought in summer.

“ *I will acknowledge my sin unto Thee; and my unrighteousness have I not hid.*

“ I said *I will confess my sins unto the LORD; and so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin.*”

Psalm li. ver. 1—6.

“ Have mercy upon me, O God, after thy great goodness: according to the multitude of thy mercies, do away mine offences.

“ Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin.

“ For I acknowledge my faults, and my sin is ever before me.

“ *Against Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified in thy saying, and clear, when Thou art judged.*

“ Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me.

“ But lo, Thou requirest truth in the inward

parts ; and *shalt make me to understand wisdom secretly.*"

It is impossible for a mind that has preserved any taste for moral beauty, to peruse these overflowings of touching and animated devotion, without imbibing something of a similar spirit ; and we accordingly find that these Psalms were adopted by the Jewish Nation at large into their National Worship, (and are continued to this day by most Christian Societies) to express at once their sentiments of piety, and their conviction of the truth of the doctrines, as well as of the predictions they contained.

Now I think, nothing of this species of *filial* devotion, nothing of this practical reference to the *paternal* government of Providence over *each* individual of the world, is to be found in any of the numerous Philosophers of the Heathen World: still less are they discernible in the habits of the multitude, as far as we have the means of ascertaining them. — Rational Prayer to the Divine Being, and an habitual direct regard to his Will, in the ordinary

course of moral conduct, formed no part of their philosophy.

This distinction is remarkable; and is to be traced, I conceive, to two circumstances; namely, to the juster views of the Deity entertained by the Jews; and particularly to their *more settled* conviction of the truth and certainty of those views. Their Faith did not rest on the vague and contradictory speculations of their philosophers, but (as *they* believed at least) on *Divine Authority*: else whence this wonderful superiority and comparative sublimity in religious sentiments and worship in a people naturally gross, and in all other respects justly enough deemed barbarous by the then civilized part of the world? Can any natural cause be assigned for it?

Upon the whole, I believe we may without fear of reasonable contradiction, affirm that the singularly just opinions held, throughout so many ages by the Jews, (*as a People*; and not merely by a few of their Philosophers,) and *by them only* of all nations upon the earth, respecting the Unity, Spirituality, and Sanctity

of the Deity, as well as his Providence ; together with the beneficial influence the universal and settled conviction of these truths had on their national worship and sentiments, afford no mean presumptions of the justice of their pretensions to Divine Revelation : and that these presumptions are greatly strengthened, when coupled with what we have noticed above of the fulfilment of the *Predictions* contained in the Psalms. No candid mind can, I think, satisfactorily refer the whole of these peculiarities to any given *natural* causes ; and if not, we are reduced to the necessity of admitting *supernatural* interference.

In the hope that this humble attempt to illustrate some of these beautiful compositions may lead to their perusal, (whether in the course of public worship or in private,) with increased interest and edification, I shall conclude the subject with the following cautionary observations :

First, That the Reader is by no means to suppose that these remarks are offered, as con-

stituting the chief (much less the whole) evidence for the Truth of Revelation. *That* evidence consists principally of very powerful testimonies to the reality of the *miracles* asserted in the Scriptures to have been performed, and of a long chain of connected *Prophecies* delivered during a series of ages, commencing almost with the Creation, and remarkably accomplished in the person and dispensation of **CHRIST**.

It is to be remembered that of this *last* topic of evidence, we have here examined merely a single branch, and that too very superficially.

My next observation is so trite that it would require an apology, but for its supreme importance: it is briefly this: — That an actual Revelation from the Deity to man, confirmed by the occasional suspension of the Laws of Nature, and by supernatural communications, *must* necessarily be a matter of no slight concern: and that while it is of the very essence of folly, to bestow our *least* attentions on our *highest* interests, it is of the first consequence to impress

our minds with the awful lesson taught us by this Revelation ; namely, that no correctness of religious belief,—nor the mere absence of gross vice ;—nor any thing short of an habitual serious *endeavour* to conform our hearts and lives to the purity of the Gospel, can secure to us its rich consolations here, or its sublime rewards hereafter.



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